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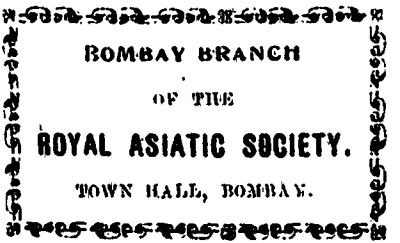

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Inscribed

WITH SINCERE REGARD

TO

JOHN HAMILL, Esq.

SONNET.

"And thought how natural it was in C. L. to give a kiss to an old folio, as I once saw him do to Chapman's 'Homer.'"—LEIGH HUNT.

For him no charm, nor sweet delight,
In maiden's tuneful company—
Nor doth he kindle at the sight
Of flushing cheek and soft blue eye.
But in his high-backed oaken-chair,
Welcomes many a grand old sage—
Turning many a saffron page—
Of folio tall and quarto rare!
Dear worthies all! and dearer yet,
Quaint Wither—Burton, ripe and old—
Rich Fuller, strewn with lumps of gold—
The "high fantastic" Margaret—
Sonorous Chapman, worthy of a kiss—
Ah, sweet long nights of tranquil, sober bliss!

PERCY FITZGERALD.

PREFACE.

THOSE who look on the 'Memorials and Letters' as a household book—to be put up for the journey, with the stray volume of Boswell—may perhaps find a welcome for the following little *étude*.

That admirable biography presents a very perfect and almost sufficient picture of Lamb and of his writings. But since Talfourd's death, many more little details have become known—all characteristic and interesting—and found scattered up and down in countless books of memoirs, the locality of which the student of Elia's life and character may naturally forget, and would desire to have in a more convenient shape.

Many little details—too trifling for a regular 'Life' —fall naturally into their place here. Is it fanciful to suppose that a treatment a little fitful and rambling would be almost in keeping with Lamb's own nature, which might have shrunk from the more formal honours of official biography? Such details, too, have a special interest of their own when we take into account how full of delightful corners—of "pigeon-holes," as it were, —and quaint windings and turnings Lamb's nature was. To an old actor the sight of a blurred and faded play-bill—half a century old—brings up the foot-lights, and the crowded boxes, and the old, old nights of triumph, with a startling vividness, beside which a whole chronicle of minute description would be feeble and power less. So with Lamb. His is the character about which we should love to know everything. *There* the species is nearly the genus: each detail does not belong to a class, but is in itself unique.

It may be also stated here that no incident, statement, or letter, given in the following pages, will be found in

Talfourd's 'Life.' To that work it may, therefore, be found a useful supplement: until, at least, the work—upon which Mr. Procter is known to be engaged —shall make its appearance.

My best acknowledgments are due to Mr. S. C. Hall for assistance in this little book; and I have to thank Messrs. Longman, the proprietors of the 'Autographic Journal,' and Mr. Joseph Cottle, of Bristol, for permission to use the portraits, &c., which illustrate this book.

P. F.

CHARLES LAMB.

ABOUT this unique and delightful being there has been plenty written in an almost loving way. His ways and manner of life have been woven for us into a piece, and as we go over it carefully we find but few threads dropped. Some of these, perhaps of small importance indeed, may be thought worth while picking up; for anything, surely, will be welcome that helps, even in a small degree, to bring us in contact with this engaging writer. Just as we might fancy ourselves in his room after his death, taking up his inkstand—his pen—the book he last read, with the leaf turned down—the

folios; "my midnight darlings," as he called them, so pathetically—"those huge armfuls"—even his forsworn pipe, (and with what reverence and delicacy we would lay our hands on such relics); so might we relish these little "odds and ends," gathered up out of byways and out of corners—little shreds and patches of no great quality beyond having a reference to this arch-essayist and most delightful man. For, of writings so unique in their kind, where the species, as he himself said of a book, *is* the whole genus, surprisingly little has been said. Yet they might be studied over and over again—lectured and commented on by the hour and by the volume—and always with fresh profit. And when we pass from the writings to the writer—so curious and varied is the subject—we shall be pretty sure to find nearly the same entertainment.

And the more we walk round his image, and the closer we look, the more nearly we arrive at this conclusion: that the Elia on our shelves is all but the same being as the pleasant Charles, who was so loved by his friends

—who "ransomed" from the stalls, to use old Richard of Bury's phrase, his Thomas Browne and the "dear silly old Angel," Fuller—and who stammered out such quaint jests and puns. For by feeding on this ripe old food—and training his mind to daily (and nightly) airings in the twisted walks and old-fashioned yew-bordered alleys of these rare gardens of ancient English literature, it had insensibly taken the colour, the shape of thought, the very fashion of viewing things, which such an association would suggest. And as these writers—living in simple days, when writing had not become a mere handicraft—felt that a sort of commission to speak and preach was given to them, and said their say with a straight earnestness, and a single simplicity, without any folds of affectation hanging between them and the public—so Lamb, in this company, seems to have caught up this honour and *truthfulness* of utterance, and learned to shrink from writing down anything that was not as it were *part of himself.* This is indeed the only class of writing that

will live, or bear study, as the mind of a real being will bear study; and it is hoped that the view of such a harmony existing between Lamb and his writings, will be worked out in the following pages—illustrating also many curious little turns and incidents which may not have been hitherto noticed.

All agree about the charming characteristics of Lamb's face and expression. With those happy enough to have known him, the recollection of it lingers, as of some soft evening—something inexpressibly sweet and gentle —to be looked back to with a sort of yearning. There was the large but fine head on the small, spare body, and the two "immaterial" legs, as Thomas Hood called them, catching Elia's own tone. About this face, apart from its expression, was an ancient quaintness—being full of wiry lines, with a deep earnestness about the brows, a rather hooked nose, and decided mouth. We all know these old-fashioned faces, full of character, but we do not meet so often that touching, half melancholy smile, under which his more observant friends saw

lingering a sense of old troubles; nor those wonderful eyes, the lamps of the whole face—glittering, turning—*yeux petillants*—looking, as Mr. Procter said, as if "they would pick up pins and needles." Add to this the black suit, the gaiters also black, of a rustic old-fashioned cut, yet very neat—not at all verging on those who carry professional black, *i. e.*, physicians or doctors, or divines, but a sable air of his own, and the little sketch at the beginning of this volume, allowing a small margin for an overdrawn grotesque, seems to convey a good notion of Elia.

In the delightful paper on 'Books and Reading' there were originally some little touches, afterwards carefully cut away, and, it must be said, with advantage to the paper. Still they are words of Lamb, and as such we shall be glad to have them. It will be seen that they gave a more local and temporary character to the paper. Thus, after "The 'Chronicle' is in hand, sir," he had put in a little bit of personal character.

"As in these little diurnals I generally skip the

Foreign News, the Debates, and the Politics, I find the 'Morning Herald' by far the most entertaining of them. It is an agreeable miscellany rather than a newspaper." Fear of being thought flippant on the subject of Shakspeare no doubt made him remove the following:—"I do not care for a first folio of Shakspeare. You cannot make a pet book of an author whom everybody reads." Then expressing his humorous repugnance to the "octavo editions" of Beaumont and Fletcher, and confessing "he had no sympathy with them," he had added, "*nor with Mr. Gifford's Ben Jonson.*" There was also the curious emendation, when speaking of the cruel dressing-up of "old Burton," in a neat, double-columned, new publication: "in a winding-sheet of the latest edition," he had written; but it now stands, "in a winding-sheet of the *newest fashion.*"

This was not a conceit or pleasant turn; for when purchasing old dramatists for Wordsworth, he wrote to him of a "Beaumont and Fletcher *in folio*—the

right folio not now to be met with: the octavos are about 3*l.*"

His fancy for books, and the old "Exemplars" of books, is very intelligible to old collectors. But never did their faith find so true and *unofficial* an expounder: and this has nothing in common with the miserable mania of gathering editions and copies, and of frantically hunting after "rare" copies, at rare prices. But that the enjoyment in *reading* a ripe old author, and possessing him too in his original old costume—in his flaps and bands, and embroidery and ruffles,—that the sober toned paper, the "old cut" type and binding, the small "in-folio" shape, should be in tune as it were with the old gold and silver of the style, and the quaint turns and spelling—this surely is intelligible, or may be conceded as a little luxury—an enhancing of the pleasures, in which faithful book epicures may indulge themselves. It is in truth born of that exquisite *reverence* which all true lovers of reading feel for those rare old writers, who had but one unselfish

purpose in what they wrote—to speak with all earnestness and sincerity.

There is one Lamb would have delighted in, but whom he does not appear to have known—old Richard of Bury, the author of 'Philobiblon"—who revels in his treasures, but who is himself rarely to be found on a stall. After all there seems almost a purifying influence in this pleasant exploring of out-door shelves—a quaint, honest pursuit, not without its own excitement—very different indeed from the luxurious taste of the wealthy amateur,—the prodigal who purchases costly wares out of *catalogues* and West-end shops. Lodged and very often reclothed—at least redecorated with new gilding—these old Pilgrim Fathers, transferred to what must seem to them palaces, have a different air. They are not in harmony. The value set on them is purely artificial, and their possession, secured at an extravagant outlay, very soon palls. For whatever pleasure the new proprietor has in their fruition must be a little dwindled by reflection over

the heavy charges they had put him to. With what is found on the stalls it is otherwise. There is the surprise of discovery, the excitement of the bargain, the disagreement and purchase deferred, and the final acquisition.

Even over the stall-keepers themselves, their calling exercises a chastening influence. They are generally *simple* men, rarely griping.

So with those who explore the stalls. They have a special eye, a quick glance that runs along the shelves; which as it lights on the peculiar rusted back—say the tarnished but mellow "bit" of old French red morocco —kindles with an eagle glance. So with their touch, which is almost tender, opening with a familiar but cautious reverence, and laying the book back softly, not *ramming* it violently between its fellows, to the certain abrasion of its sides, as rude heretics do. After all, it is a good and redeeming toleration in those who watch over public buildings, bridge parapets, and the like, who suffer the humble professors of this craft, and allow

to their shelves wall space. This is a redeeming feature in our hard, practical age; and who shall say that it is not a warm, pleasant, and appropriate furniture—like ivy for a wall—for the outside of inns of court, for the long stretch of the Quai Voltaire, and the bases of the Academy pillars in gay Paris? It gives a subdued monastic or scholastic air, that tells of quiet men and gentle scholars—gentle scholars, like Walter Scott, Lamb, and a hundred others.

We have only to turn to a little scene in the second volume of "friend Hone's" chatty 'Table Books' to see Lamb in one of his best attitudes, at a stall: "Rummaging over the contents of an old stall, at a half book, half old-iron shop, in Ninety-four Alley, leading from Wardour-street to Soho, yesterday, I lit upon a ragged duodecimo, which had been the strange delight of my infancy. . . . . The price demanded was sixpence, which the owner (a little squab duodecimo of a character himself) enforced with the assurance that his own mother should not have

it for a farthing less. On my demurring to this extraordinary assertion, the dirty little vendor re-enforced his assertion with a sort of oath, which seemed more than the occasion demanded: "and now," said he, "I have put my soul to it." Pressed by so solemn an asseveration, I could no longer resist a demand which seemed to set me, however unworthy, upon a level with his nearest relations; and, depositing a tester, I bore away the tattered prize in triumph."

That was a very charming trait of Charles Lamb, found in one of Hunt's 'Indicators,' and worth whole pages of description: "thought how natural it was in C. L. *to give a kiss to an old folio*, as I once saw him do to Chapman's Homer." We know how he relished "divine old Chapman." He looked on these old veterans as living worthies, and there was no affectation in the homage. This same paper of Hunt's is interesting as giving us a charming sketch of Lamb among his books: —"I believe I did mention his book-room to C. L., and I think he told me that he often sat there when

alone. It would be hard not to believe him. His library, though not abounding in Greek and Latin, is anything but superficial. The depths of philosophy and poetry are there, the imminent passages of the human heart. It has some Latin too. It has also a handsome contempt for appearance. It looks like what it is—a selection made at precious intervals from the book-stalls; now a Chaucer at 9*s.* 2*d.*; now a Montaigne, or a Sir Thomas Browne, at 2*s.*; now a Jeremy Taylor, a Spinoza, an old English Dramatist, Prior, and Sir Philip Sidney, and the books are 'real as imputed.' The very perusal of the backs is 'a discipline of humanity.' There Mr. Southey takes his place again with an old Radical friend; here Jeremy Collier is at peace with Dryden; there the lion, Martin Luther, lies down with the greater lamb, Sewell; there Guzman d'Alfarache thinks himself fit company for Sir Charles Grandison, and has his claim admitted. Even the high, fantastical Duchess of Newcastle, with her laurel on her head"—Hunt, like many more, had of

course been shown the folio plate by Van Scuppen—"is received with grave honours, and not the less for declining to trouble herself with the constitutions of her maids."

But it has not been remarked what a curious likeness there is between this paper of Hunt's and Lamb's delightful paper on 'Books and Reading,' which appears to have been later in date. Leigh Hunt was then abroad in Italy, and his 'Indicator,' 'My Books,' appeared on the 5th of July, 1823. Now Lamb's first 'Elia' series was published in that very year; and if 'Books and Reading' had been written, he would have included it in his collection. It may have been that its odd fancies and even expressions might have been part of his daily and nightly talk—even of his letters—which Lamb had poured out upon his friends, and which were vividly present to Hunt's mind. A few casual passages will show this singular resemblance. I am almost inclined to believe that we have actually thoughts of Lamb's, which, with a nicer sense, he

dropped out of his own Essay. It may be assumed that every reader has Lamb's Essay fresh in his mind, I therefore do not give it here.

"I yield to none," Hunt says in Number 77 of his 'Indicator,' "in my love of book-stall urbanity. I have spent as happy moments over the stalls as any literary apprentice boy who ought to be moving onwards. But I confess my weakness in liking to see some of my favourites neatly bound. The books I like to have about me most are Spenser, Chaucer, the minor poems of Milton, Theocritus, Ariosto, and such old good-natured speculators as Plutarch's morals. For most of these I like a plain, good old binding, never mind how old provided it wears well; but my 'Arabian Nights' may be bound in as fine and flowery a style as possible, and I should love an engraving to every dozen pages. Book prints of all sorts take with me as much as when I was a child; and I think some books, such as 'Prior's Poems,' ought always to have portraits of the authors. Prior's airy face, with his cap on, is like having his company.

From early associations, no book pleases me so much as that in which there are pictures of the Devil, with brute ears, dressed like a Roman general.

"I delight in the recollection of the puzzle I used to have with the frontispiece of the 'Tale of a Tub;' of my real horror at the sight of that crawling old man representing avarice in the 'Enfield's Speaker,' or some such book.... The oldest and most worn-out woodcut representing 'King Pippin,' 'Goody Two Shoes,' or the grim Soldan, sitting with three staring blots for his eyes and mouth, his sceptre in one hand, and his other five fingers raised and spread, in admiration at the feats of the Gallant London 'Prentice, cannot excite in me a feeling of ingratitude. Cooke's edition of the 'British Poets and Novelists' came out when I was at school, for which reason I never could put up with Suttaby's or Walker's publications, except in the case of such works as the 'Fairy Tales,' which Mr. Cooke did not publish. Besides, they are too thick, cramped and mercenary; and the pictures are all frontispieces: they do

not come in at the proper places. . . . I never shall forget the gratitude with which I received an odd number of 'Akenside,' value sixpence, which a boarder distributed among three or four of us, 'with his mother's compliments.' The present might have been more lavish, but I hardly thought of that. I remember my number. It was the one in which there is a picture of the poet on a sofa, with Cupid coming to him, and the words underneath, 'Tempt me no more, insidious Love!' The picture and the number appeared to me equally divine."

The resemblance here both in tone, allusion, phrase, and often the very words, is certainly very remarkable. Hunt had very much the same tone of feeling towards books that his friend had. Later, young Hartley Coleridge took up the same strain, and almost in the same key. Lovers of Leigh Hunt, who like to hear him chatter pleasantly in his 'Tatler,' and 'Indicator,' and 'London Journal,' will remember the fond personal tone of criticism with which he dealt with favourite books, and the

beauties of favourite books. He is like an epicurean over a choice dish. No doubt, like his friend Lamb, he was tempted to say grace before banquets of books, as before banquets of meat. This doting and almost succulent relish has something genuine in it; though Hunt seems to have been almost too catholic in his taste. He found some sort of beauty in almost every page. He scored profusely with his pencil. His welcome to the fifth edition of 'The Tales from Shakespeare' is, in the fullest sense of that quiet "purring" enjoyment with which he used to hang over a book he loved: In that pleasant daily 'Tatler,' "price one penny," whose motto was "*Veritas et varietas*," he speaks heartily and with beaming eyes: —

"There is a certain neatness and painstaking in the vignettes to this volume and a meritorious wish to make every figure tell. It is a pity the artist has made his figures so tall, and for the most part so weak in their bearing. The letter-press is delightful. The beautiful simplicity of this series of tales made us, when a child, hold it, as we still do, one of our favourite

books—one of the few we especially love, that we would carry on a journey or save from an accident. It is a book in every way calculated to diffuse the love of the great dramatist, which must have made Mr. Lamb conceive and accomplish his benignant and pleasant task." No one, in truth, so loveably appreciated 'Elia' as Hunt.

In his 'London Journal' Hunt had "full swing," and could pour out his whims and fancies with the freest familiarity—a book of the most varied and agreeable reading we can find. Into this he copied choice bits of 'Elia,' with little introductions specially his own, as—

"[Here followeth, gentle reader, the immortal record of Mrs. Battle and her whist; a game which the author, as thou wilt see, wished that he could play for ever; and accordingly, *in the deathless pages of his wit, for ever will he play it.*—ED.]"

In another place he says affectionately—"We wish that the 'London Journal' should contain whatever has been said in any quarters calculated to do honour

to our excellent friend, and to increase the desire of the reading public to become acquainted with him." In this Journal of his, Leigh Hunt had a pleasant practice of reading a poem as it were, aloud, with his readers, and pointing out beauties to them by scoring special passages. The first of his selections from Lamb, and only the first, he read in this way, and it is, of some little interest to see what strokes specially excited his imagination. He picks out the "Burial Society," underlining "What sting is there in death *which the handles with the wrought gripes are not calculated to pluck away?* What victory in the grave which the drops and the velvet pall *do not render at least extremely disputable?*"—which, it will be recollected, refers to an undertaker's advertisement, and is exquisitely ludicrous. He also selects "ugly subjects," and the marvellous description of the old maid's supper set out for their party, which it is impossible to refrain from giving here:—"A sliver of ham, purposely contrived to be transparent to show the China dish through

it, neighbouring a slip of invisible brown, which abuts upon something they call a tartlet, as that is bravely supported by an atom of marmalade, flanked in its turn by a grain of potted beef, with a power of such dishling minims of hospitality, spread in defiance of human nature, or rather with an utter ignorance of what it demands." Was there ever such a description, such exquisite contempt, as in the phrase "dishling minims of hospitality," and such cautious accuracy in the announcement that closes the sentence? "To be continued," the first of the specimens was prefaced, "until his works are gone through;" but, unhappily, the journal, like all Hunt's journals, was already tottering, and presently fell.

Those who are fond of Hunt's writings — and there are many — will be glad to learn that in the 'Indicator,' Lamb's favourite pieces were 'Coaches and their Horses,' 'The Death of Little Children,' and 'Thoughts and Guesses upon Human Nature.' A little fear of British prudery had made Hunt change the

name of one of his poems from 'The Battle of the Shift' into the 'Gentle Armour,' to Lamb's dissatisfaction, who said it always looked as if it was ashamed of its owner's name.

All who recollect how Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle, recurs to Charles Lamb, and recall his affection for that book, will feel a little curiosity as to that high fantastical 'Margaret, Duchess of Newcastle,' a book, about whose pricelessness and peerlessness, Lamb raves with such pleasant burlesque, and whose loss from his shelves—she was borrowed—he so deplored. It is not a rare book, nor a costly book—its value being set down by the proper authorities at about fifteen shillings. But Lamb, we may be sure, skilled in the traffic of book-stalls, secured her for far less. Yet even in the bare title of this incomparable lady's works, there is a quaint and rococo air, quite enough to tickle Lamb into raptures of bibliographical delight. She wrote many works, all "in folio;" but the special one he delighted in were the 'CCXI. Sociable Letters'

Some were set off with a portrait of "the Incomparable Princess," sitting in a high-backed chair, and engraved by "*Van Scuppen.*" There were also 'The World's Olio—Nature's Pictures, drawn by Fancie's Pencil to the Life'—also 'Orations of Divers Sorts, accommodated to Divers Places.' This accomplished "Princess" also wrote plays, which she prefaced with dedications to her husband, the noble duke, and *ten other* stately dedications to "her noble readers." Here, too, we have Van Scuppen again; and the copy in the British Museum is "enriched" with the incomparable princess's own marginal notes. Altogether there is an air of powder and sack-backs, a vision of minuet curtseyings and prim stateliness, quite enough to delight Charles Lamb.

It is pleasant to think that one so nice and dainty in palate as he was, about the "dressing" of books—so sensitive and epicurean as regards typography, paper, and editions, should, in his own works, have been gratified by all the little elegancies of typography. To

be a dandy, or *petit mâitre*, in such things is very pardonable; and there is a fond and delicate homage in the offering of fine type, broad margin, and toned paper, to a writer that we love, almost akin to the flowers and draperies with which the altar of a patron saint is dressed. Charles Lamb would have looked down the line of his own books with fond admiration. They harmonize prettily.

And after all, there is a sort of fanciful luxury—quite pardonable—in reading the book we love in the "original shape." Very few have had in their hands the first collected edition of the immortal 'Essays'—a small, bright volume, entitled 'ELIA,' not 'The Essays of Elia,' as they were to become later. Someway, there is an aroma about these original books. It is the shape the author's own eye rested on and approved. It is a link between him and us; just as Charles Lamb, I believe, used, by a sort of chain of "handshakings," comically fancy he might have indirectly shaken Shakspeare's hand. The delightful

paper on books and editions lets us into a hundred little whims and *minauderies* of this sort which the book collector will comprehend. "On the contrary, I cannot read Beaumont and Fletcher but in folio; the octavo editions are painful to look at." But there are "things in books' clothing" which make one writhe nd shiver, and which distress the eye;—the well-eant compromise between meanness and abundance —between cheapness and good measure—between "nastiness" and a "good armful" notion, which takes the shape of the "complete works" in "one vol." with double columns. "I know nothing," says Lamb, "more heartless than the reprint of the 'Anatomy of Melancholy.'" But he little dreamed he himself should be taken, packed and compressed, into that poor, straitened suit, many sizes too small, like some predecessor's livery, all straitened, without a fold, or even a wrinkle. This seems a cruel and wanton degradation for one who has gloried in fine clothes, and who could stretch his arms with freedom. As he said of Burton, so it might

be said to his publisher, "What need was there of unearthing the bones of that fantastic, old, great man, to expose them in a winding-sheet of the newest fashion?" Yet never were the "shabby genteel" double columns so fined and polished, or given in such rich material—best of type and paper; but still nothing can carry off the cut and pattern. Had this abomination fairly taken root in the days of 'Elia,' what a pleasant protest he would have given against the well-meaning but grovelling fashion!

The original 'Elia,' now open before me, is at the sign of Taylor and Hessey, 95, Fleet-street. (We hear Charles Lamb telling how a copy was waiting for a friend "*penes* Taylor and Hessey.") It is singularly rare. Those who are fortunate enough to have this book should know that they possess a bibliographical treasure. It was scarce in 1834, when Lamb was alive, and even then "the species was almost the genus." "Dear Sir," wrote Lamb, in that year, "the volume which you seem to want is

not to be had for love or money. I with difficulty procured a copy for myself." And certainly it must be said, that to read the 'Essays' in that bright, clear, open type, is to read them with an enjoyment and relish not to be found in presence of the "double columns."

Pursuing this bibliographical review, there is before me now a little volume, in rather mean dress, dated 1796, being the 'Poems on Various Subjects, by S. T. Coleridge, late of Jesus College, Cambridge,' printed by Robinson of London for Cottle of Bristol. This is another scarce treasure. It is curious that Talfourd should not have noticed the first appearance of four of Lamb's sonnets in this collection, which was nearly a year previous to the "joint-stock" venture of Coleridge, Lamb, and Lloyd, which is described in the 'Memorials.' More curious still that Lamb himself should seem to forget this modest entrance on the stage of his little verses: for in a dedication that came long after, he says, addressing Coleridge, "It would be a kind of

disloyalty to offer to any one but yourself a volume containing the early pieces which were first published among your poems. My friend Lloyd and myself came into our *first* battle under cover of the greater Ajax." Coleridge, in his preface, introduces those soft and pretty initials "C. L.," which were to have a sort of colour and harmony for the eye, and for forty years were to grow very familiar to the public. "'The Effusions,'" he says, "signed C. L. were written by Mr. Charles Lamb, of the India House. Independent of his signature, their superior merit would have distinguished them." A style and title which seems to have struck quaintly on Lamb's ear, for when the new poems were getting ready he wrote out a full title-page with the same description. These four sonnets are the ones commencing, "Was it some sweet device of Faeryland?" which becomes "Effusion XI." of Coleridge; "Methinks how dainty sweet it were," which is "Effusion XII.," one to Mrs. Siddons; and "I could laugh to hear the midnight wind," which in his collected poems

becomes one of a series, and is only distinguished by a number, but here has a lofty title,

"WRITTEN
AT MIDNIGHT
BY THE
SEA-SIDE AFTER A VOYAGE."

The little venture in which Lloyd, Coleridge, and Lamb were joined, is rarer still. But it has an interest beyond this. In the preface Coleridge speaks with true warmth of his "old friend and schoolfellow, Charles Lamb." "He has now," he continues, "communicated to me a complete collection of all his poems," and on the title-page is a generous testimony of his affection in the quotation, "Duplex nobis vinculum et amicitiæ et similium junctarumque Camænarum *quod utinam neque mors sólvat neque temporis longinquitas.*"

In this collection, too, was that rather bombastic sonnet, beginning—

NOT STANHOPE! with the Patriot's doubtful name.
I mark thy worth: FRIEND OF THE HUMAN RACE!

which Coleridge stated afterwards was merely a bur-

CHARLES LAMB

lesque on the raptures of the Friends of Liberty, and "the bloated style of Jacobinical declamation" of that day. And he said it was Lamb who made him insert it in his new edition. On another occasion he laid it to the account of "that fool of a printer," Biggs; who wished to curry favour with Lord Stanhope.

One year Mr. Edward Moxon, whose name, someway, always seems to chime in a sort of "third" with that of Lamb—the man whom Leigh Hunt called the "bookseller of the poets, and with no disparagement to him from the antithesis, a poet among booksellers"—starting in business, was anxious to show the public with what elegance he would equip his books. "You were desirous," said his friend, Lamb, "of exhibiting a specimen of the manner in which publications intrusted to your care would appear. They are simply advertisement verses." And thus was introduced the pretty little volume, 'Album Verses, with a few others,' by Charles Lamb; an inviting title-page, with a graceful vignette of a "pastoral boy" busily writing. A bright,

gay little book, printed by Bradbury and Evans, now not to be seen on the stalls, or hunted up in the Barbican. Some verses written in Mrs. S. C. Hall's album, and not included in this little collection, will be welcome in this place:—

I had sense in dreams of a Beauty rare,
Whom fate had spell-bound and rooted there,
Stooping, like some enchanted Theme,
Over the marge of that crystal stream
Where the blooming Greek to Echo blind,
With self-love fond had to waters pined.

Chas Lamb

Some of these verses appeared in the now old-fashioned Annuals; and one little poem I have found in 'The Cameo,' in company with the verses of Coleridge, Procter, and others.

When they came out, a smart but very short and trifling criticism, done in a flippantly slashing style, welcomed them in the 'Literary Gazette.' It is inconceivable at this distance of time how such a comment, scarcely to be compared with a really "severe" notice of our day, could have caused such deep resentment. But there was then savage warfare, semi-political, among those who used the pen professionally, and reviews were often the arms of politics.

"If anything," said this notice, "could prevent our laughing at the present collection of absurdities it would be a lamentable conviction of the blinding and engrossing nature of vanity. We could forgive the folly of the original composition, but cannot but marvel at the egotism which has preserved, and the conceit which has published. What an exaggerated notion must that man entertain of his talents who believes their slightest efforts worthy of remembrance; one who keeps a copy of the verses he writes in young ladies' albums, the proverbial receptacles for trash!"

These were good set terms, and they finished with yet harder, giving great commendation to the *typography*, but adding "we could have dispensed with this specimen."

The whole was scarcely a column in length; but it excited the deepest resentment. Southey and Hunt rushed into the 'Times' and the 'Examiner' with stinging verses and bitter prose. It was remembered long after, and yet it should have been recollected, that the 'Gazette' had done ample justice to Lamb's *other* productions, and that compared with the high standard Lamb himself had furnished to his friends and admirers, these are poor and weakly, though graceful, rhymes. Long after noticing 'Elia's Essays,' the same journal alluded to the attacks that had been made on itself. "And nearly the whole of the dirty *would-be squibs* and epigrams which issued from the scribbling clique alluded to, rang the changes on Peter Pindar's filthy idea expanded into the corresponding rhyme." Nothing could be more cordial than their welcome of the 'Essays.' They did

not visit on his head what they owed to his friends. But to return to this delightful volume," they said, of the "last essays," which shall be "bound in fresh-clad hopeful green—we were going to have said and gold—but that is too costly for the daily wear and tear of its future destiny." A genial expression of enjoyment, like what Leigh Hunt would have spoken. So, too, with the 'Tales from Shakespeare.' "The book is neatly bound in coloured cloth—a species of binding which has a very good effect, though, we fear, not very lasting." So with the 'Specimens'—"a new and very neat, edition of a book which ought to be never out of print, for it is full of sweetness and beauty." His verses they could not tolerate. "The gems, it may be, are not all diamonds and precious stones, but the Bristol stones and garnets are extremely pretty, and the best of their kind."

After all, what was this to the attack of the old 'Monthly Review,' now in a sort of toothless dotage, but in which the old sour juices of Kenrick, chief of review "hacks," and of the Griffiths who wrung Gold-

smith's heart, seemed still to circulate. It led off in this fashion:—

> Some few years ago there was in this metropolis a little coterie of half-bred men who took up poetry and literature as a trade, and who having access to one or two Sunday newspapers, and now and then to the magazines and reviews, puffed off each other as the first writers of the day. Among them was Mr. Leigh Hunt, Mr. Procter, better known under the title of Barry Cornwall, Mr. Hazlitt, some half a dozen others whose names we forget, and Mr. Charles Lamb, the inditer of the precious verses before us.
>
> * * * * * * *
>
> Poor fellow! he looks more like a ghost than anything human or divine. His verses partake of the same character. They were gleaned from the albums of rural damsels, who, hearing that Charles Lamb was an author, chose to have a *morçeau* from his classic pen to show to their sires and lovers.
>
> At one time, from the causes which we have stated, and from the assenting and thoughtless smiles of one or two celebrated men, this individual gained a reputation for quaint wit. So quaint indeed does it appear to have been, that it has not kept. It has grown so musty that it is no longer fit for use. . . . . Charles Lamb, forsooth, thinks that such effusions as the 'Album Verses' will be equally serviceable to Mr. Moxon. . . . . Delicious to the ear of Miss Jane Towers was, no doubt, the address of a poet who had never chanced to see her fair face. . . . . Our only regret is that the book was not only clasped tight, but locked, however injurious the consequences might have been to poor Moxon.

How far such a publisher as Mr. Moxon ought to be considered as an accomplice in your transgressions, is a question that would admit of no doubt.

He ought to be adjudged the greatest offender of all; and the least degree of punishment assignable to such a convict should be to give him an hour or two in the hopper.

It will scarcely be believed that this could ever have been penned so lately as thirty years ago.

Talfourd has only glanced at the rude treatment 'John Woodvil' met with from the young 'Edinburgh Review;' but a specimen of its past complacency, and almost boyish impudence in dealing with "Mr. Lamb," will be amusing. It is to the same note which Sidney Smith struck in the first number, where, dealing with Parr's sermons, and Parr's wig, telling of the "boundless convexity of friz" of the latter, and recovering the reviewer out of a trance by removing the former to a distance. The play, say these agreeable wags—

Introduces what we believe is a novelty on the stage, a peal of church bells giving their summons to morning service.

(*A noise of bells heard.*)

Margaret.—Hark the bells, John.

John.—Those are the church bells of St. Mary Ottery.
Margaret.—I know it.
John.—St. Mary Ottery, my native village,
In the sweet shire of Devon.
Those are the bells.

The exactness of John's information is of peculiar use; as Margaret, having been some time at Nottingham, may be supposed to have forgotten the name of the parish, and perhaps of the sweet shire itself; and the cautious and solemn iteration at the close, in an affair of so much moment, gives an emphasis to the whole that is almost inimitable.

But there was a reason for Lamb's dwelling on this portion of the "sweet shire of Devon." St. Mary Ottery was Coleridge's birthplace.

They then remark on the extraordinary development of "drunkenness" through the piece; and reading it over now, it must be confessed that this phase seems to recur a little often.

(*Enter at another door, Three calling for Harry Freeman.*)
Harry Freeman! Harry Freeman!
He is not here. Let us go look for him.
Where is Freeman?
Where is Harry?
[*Exeunt the Three, calling for Freeman.*

We may here remark, as tending to increase the confusion so happily expressive of drunkenness, the ingenuity of the artifice by which four speeches are given to those persons, without stating to whom the fourth shall belong.

But what was meant to be a more severe stroke follows:—

If the plot and character of 'John Woodvil' be not sufficient to establish its antiquity, its language will powerfully concur. The most ancient versification was probably *very rude*.

It then quoted a sentence from Burton, "which Mr. Lamb introduced, perhaps, as descriptive of his own composition:"—"The fruit, issue, children, of these my morning meditations, have been certain crude, impolite, incomposite (what shall I say?) verses." Still it must be said that a book of the class of 'John Woodvil,' coming out in our own day, and from the hand of a writer so obscure as Lamb then was, would have been a very tempting *plat* to be set before a critic.

The reckless coterie in young 'Blackwood' were a little embarrassed between their admiration of one who

was after their own heart, and their political fury against the "crew" to which he belonged. They were nettled at Hunt's rude admiration of him. "Charles Lamb," he wrote, in 1818, "a single one of whose speculations on humanity is worth all the *half-way-house gabblings* of critics on the Establishment." This strange phrase infuriated them; yet they found out excuses for Lamb. "Probably his good-nature," they wrote, "endures their quackery." But later, a pseudo Doctor Petre wrote a furious letter on some paper in the 'London,' not knowing it to be Elia's: calling, too, the paper on 'April Fools' "columns of mere inanity and very cockneyism."

The tracing the *limæ labor*, in writers whom we love and study, is one of the most interesting as well as instructive of studies. It lets us into the little corners and closets of their minds, opens to us the whole treasury of little conceits, doubts, retractions, delightful literary indecisions, and leads us gradually to the final brilliant flash which decides.

Thus welcome comes the great artist's old album with the little pencil notes, and the rough but most spirited sketches of gable and corbel, the fishwoman's face, and the monk's devotional head. These hints lift up the heavy official curtain, admit us to a delightful intimacy and confidence, and help to an infinitely more familiar knowledge of character.

With Lamb specially, who was so choice and quaint in his turns, and with whom "collocation," and even order, is an exquisite art, this study becomes valuable. The little sonnets already noticed which appeared under the sober shelter of Coleridge's 'Religious Musings' are a favourable instance of this care and correction. These three sonnets made at least three distinct appearances. On their first, Coleridge would seem to have altered, and even re-written portions. Thus the one called 'Effusion the Twelfth' has quite a little history of its own. It runs in its original printed shape:—

Methinks, how dainty sweet it were, reclin'd
Beneath the vast *o'ershadowing* branches high
Of some old wood, in careless sort to lie,
Nor of the busier scenes, we left behind,
Aught envying! And O, Anna! mild-eyed maid!
BELOVED! I were well content to play
With thy free tresses *the long* summer day,
Cheating the time beneath the greenwood shade.
But ah! sweet scenes of fancied bliss, adieu!
On rose-leaf beds amid your faery bowers
I all too long have lost the dreamy hours!
Beseems it now the sterner muse to woo,
If haply she her golden mead impart
To realize the vision of her heart.

In its late shape Lamb altered "o'ershadowing" into the more forcible "outstretching;" for the "long summer day," put "all a summer's day;" and for "cheating," the simpler "losing." The last six lines are wholly Coleridge's. When the sonnet was to make its second appearance with some verses of Lloyd's, Lamb pleaded hard and characteristically for the restoration of his original lines, which are more in quiet continuation with the thought of the sonnet.

"I love my sonnets," he says, "because they are the reflected images of my own feelings at different times. . . . I charge you, Coleridge, spare my ewe lambs; and though a gentleman may borrow six lines in an epic poem, still in a sonnet, or personal poem, I do not 'ask my friend the aiding verse'" The last six lines then became:—

> Or we might sit and tell some tender tale
> Of faithful vows repaid by cruel scorn,
> A tale of true love, or of friend forgot;
> And I would teach thee, lady, how to rail
> In gentle sort, on those who practise not,
> Or love, or pity, though of woman born.

EFFUSION XI.

> Was it some sweet device of Faeryland
> That mock'd my steps with many a lonely glade,
> And fancied wand'rings with a fair-haired maid?
> Have these things been? Or did the wizard wand
> Of Merlin wave, impregning vacant air,
> And kindle up the vision of a smile
> In those blue eyes, that seem'd to speak the while
> Such tender things, as might enforce despair

To drop the murthering knife, and let go by
His fell resolve? Ah me! the lonely glade
Still courts the footsteps of the fair-haired maid!
Among whose locks the west winds love to sigh:
But I forlorn do wander, reckless where,
And 'mid my wand'rings find no ANNA there.

With later publishing, and in some points a return to first ideas, it took quite a new shape. But it may be questioned whether most readers will not prefer the original state. The picture has been almost too much "touched upon:"—

Was it some sweet device of Faery,
That mocked my steps with many a lonely glade,
And fancied wand'rings with a fair-haired maid?
Have these things been? Or what rare witchery
Impregning with delights the charmed air,
Enlightened up the semblance of a smile
In those fine eyes? Methought they spake the while
Soft soothing things, which might enforce despair
To drop the murdering knife, and let go by
His foul resolve. And does the lonely glade
Still court the footsteps of the fair-haired maid?
Still in her locks the gales of summer sigh!
While I forlorn do wander, reckless where,
And 'mid my wand'rings meet no Anna there.

His indecision about even a single word is highly curious. Thus, in the first line Coleridge was for "sweet device of Faeryland;" Lamb for, "sweet device of Faery;" but, after many doubts, adopted his friend's view. But in the next edition he went back to his first choice, and it now stands "Faery." He objected also to "the wizard wand of Merlin wave," as likely to suggest a burlesque association with a magician of that name in Oxford Street. So in the sonnet written "after a voyage," for "*Ev'n* as a child," he later put "*Like* to a child;" for "to my *rapt* mind" he substituted "raised mind." The line—

> "And her dread visions give a rude delight,"

he altered into—

> "And her rude visions give severe delight"

And the last three lines,—Coleridge's—standing originally—

> And almost wish'd it were no crime to die!
> How Reason reel'd! What gloomy transports rose!
> Till the rude dashings rock'd them to repose—

took the feebler shape of—

> Ev'n till it seemed a pleasant thing to die—
> To be resolv'd into the elemental wave,
> Or take my portion with the winds that rave.

But Lamb loved his sonnets as photographs of his own feelings. The three fine lines of Coleridge jarred on him as being untrue, and "spoil the whole with me, who know it is only a fiction of yours, and that the 'rude dashings,' in fact, did not 'rock me to repose.'" This little sonnet, too, clearly points to this Margate expedition which Elia made in the 'hoy' when he was a boy, and which was the first occasion of his seeing the sea. It was an October night, and they had "stiff and blowing weather," and "the o'erwashing billows drove them below." In that "not very savoury and not very inviting little cabin" he was consoled with cards and conversations and cordials, so he could hardly have slept. The sonnet, too, was written at midnight *after* a sea voyage, so that naturally Coleridge's idea of his taking repose in the cabin was not a faithful description of the scene. But it is curious to compare Elia's recol-

lections of the first impression of the sea with that of the writer of the sonnet, which seem diametrically opposite to those of the young boy.

The sonnet to Mrs. Siddons made the fourth of this little collection, but has been dropped out of all later editions, being considered unworthy of Lamb. Coleridge left it out of their triple venture. Still, in Lamb's view of its reflecting his tone of mind at a particular time, it will be read with interest; but the reader will no doubt endorse Coleridge's view.

As when a child on some long winter's night
Affrighted, clinging to its grandam's knees,
With eager wond'ring and perturb'd delight
Listens strange tales of fearful dark decrees
Muttered to wretch by necromantic spell;
Or of those hags, who, at the witching time
Of murky midnight, ride the air sublime,
And mingle foul embrace with fiends of hell,
Cold horror drinks its blood! anon the tear
More gentle starts, to hear the beldame tell
Of pretty babes that lov'd each other dear,
Murdered by cruel Uncle's mandate fell:
Ev'n such the shiv'ring joys thy tones impart,
Ev'n so thou SIDDONS meltest my sad heart.

There is a history about the second little volume, and a moral even in its boastful motto, "Duplex nobis vinculum," &c., on the title-page—a public proclamation of the fast friendships of the little party—which was quoted as it were from "GROSCOLL. EPIST. AD CAR. UTEN., &C." . . . and gravely accepted as such, even by Talfourd. . . . But both quotation and reference were Coleridge's own invention, though he took the jest from Sterne. But before the second edition was called for, the friendship was broken up for the time, and Coleridge was complaining of the awkwardness and inconvenience of such public proclamations of past and eternal intimacy. This quarrel does not seem to have been noticed by Talfourd, and may be fairly laid to the account of Coleridge himself. This little venture was a most beautiful volume. "You are determined," he said to his publisher, "that the 'Three Bards' shall walk up Parnassus in their best bib and tucker." But not long after this gracious appearance, there came out in the 'Monthly Magazine' three sonnets, of excellent humour, in ridicule

of the predominant weakness of each of the bards, and signed, NEHEMIAH HIGGINBOTTOM. And Nehemiah turned out to be Coleridge himself.

It seems rather an uncalled-for act; for though he made himself the object of burlesque, his own strong lines could bear travestié infinitely better than the soft "*Lakish*" verses of his friends. He especially caught the *plaintive* warbling key of Lamb's sonnets.

> Yet aye she haunts the dale where erst she strayed,
> And aye beside her stalks her amorous knight;
> Still on his thighs his worsted brogues are worn,
> And through those brogues, still tattered and betorn,
> His hindward charms gleam in unearthly white;
> As when through broken clouds, at night's high moon,
> Peeps in fair fragments forth—the full-orbed harvest moon.

And again:

> TO SIMPLICITY.
>
> O! I do love thee, meek Simplicity!
> For of thy lays, the lulling simpleness
> Goes to my heart and soothes each small distress;
> Distress though small, yet haply great to me!

There is a curious fact in relation to this little

business, which has not been noticed, and is very illustrative of Coleridge's character. The lines in Lamb's sonnets which he selected for travestie, are the very lines that Lamb substituted for Coleridge's own, and restored in spite of remonstrance!

The result was a coolness. Lloyd desiring to republish his own and Lamb's poems together, without their friend, Coleridge wrote scornfully back to the publisher, who had applied for permission, "that of course he was welcome, as it was only at Lloyd's *own* request that he had accepted his companionship." Of Lamb, he contemptuously said, as he set off on his travels, "Poor Lamb, if he wants any *knowledge* he may apply to me." Lamb's answer was the well-known "Theses quædam theologicæ." And the bitter ridicule, personality, and reference to Coleridge's weakest points, involved in this little "skit," seems to have escaped Lamb's biographer. But their friendship was soon restored, and the "old familiar faces" looked on each other again. Nearly forty years later that old love was

stronger than at the beginning; and the loss of Coleridge haunted the last days of Lamb's life.

Although Lamb would not accept Coleridge's corrections of his sonnets, Coleridge had a surprising opinion of Lamb's critical acumen. He made his printer send the 'Maid of Arc' to Lamb, "whose taste and judgment I see reason to think more correct and philosophical than my own." Later, when he added new lines which he submitted to the same taste and judgment, he found that "they were so little approved by Charles Lamb, that, though I differ from him in opinion, I have not heart to finish the Poem." This fragment of Coleridge's, Talfourd says, "was written in emulation of Southey's;" but he does not appear to have known that it was actually published *as a portion* of Southey's 'Joan of Arc.'*

* Several mistakes of this sort were pointed out to Sir T. Talfourd during his lifetime. But he unaccountably seems to have neglected to correct them. Thus, Southey's *amende* was even more creditable than represented in the 'Life.' "I would," he says, "in the next number have explained or qualified it."

The touching, but almost too dismal wail—'The old familiar faces'—comes back on the memory like a plaintive song. From the perfect sincerity and *truthfulness*, before mentioned, which underlie all Lamb's verses, we can be certain that the "love" whose doors were then closed on him, and the "friend" whom he "left abruptly," were real. But an *omitted* stanza touches on a yet more dreadful loss, and renders still more certain the reality of the other allusions:—

> Where are they gone, the old familiar faces?
> *I had a mother, but she died,*
> *Died prematurely on a day of horrors.*

This allusion to her dreadful fate at the hands of her own daughter he must have felt was too awful to be looked back to, even in verse. Even on mere readers they would have jarred painfully, importing too great tragedy; and those who did not know Lamb well would have questioned its propriety. The occasion of this melancholy song was that coolness between the "Old Salutation" friends which had arisen out of Lloyd's indiscreetly showing Lamb a vain letter of Coleridge's,

in which he illustrated the question of proportions of great genius and talent, and of great talent and little genius, by his own and Lamb's temper. "I had a friend" refers to Coleridge, and the lines generally to the renewal of their old warm friendship.

The following verses, omitted also from his works, possibly for the same reason, refer to this lost parent:—

Thou should'st have longer lived, and to the grave
Have peacefully gone down in full old age:
Thy children would have tended thy grey hairs:
We might have sat, as we have often done,
By our fireside, and talked whole nights away.
Old times, old friends, and old events recalling,
With many a circumstance of trivial note,
To memory dear, and of importance grown,
How shall we tell them in a stranger's ear.

A wayward son, ofttimes I was to thee:
And yet in all our little bickerings,
Domestic jars, there was I know not what
Of tender feeling that were ill exchanged
For this world's chilling friendships, and their smiles
Familiar whom the heart calls stranger still,
A heavy lot hath he, most wretched man,
Who lives the last of all his family:

He looks around him, and his eye discerns
The face of the stranger; and his heart is sick.
Man of the world, what canst thou do for him?
Wealth is a burden which he could not bear,
Mirth a strange crime, the which he dares not act;
And generous wines no cordial to his soul.
For wounds like his, Christ is the only cure.
Go, preach thou to him of a world to come,
Where friends shall meet and know each other's face:
Say less than this, and say it to the winds.

Lamb's prose—though recast in shape a good deal—seems to have undergone not nearly so much shaping and pruning. Perhaps, with the odd perverseness of many men of genius, he fancied that his true strength lay in his verses, and that these—not Elia's Essays—were his "ewe lambs." The well-known 'Popular Fallacies' appeared in the 'New Monthly,' with an additional fallacy: "That my Lord Shaftesbury and Sir William Temple are models of the genteel style in writing;" which he afterwards—rightly thinking it was anything but a "popular" fallacy—for but few of the crowd would concern themselves with Sir William and his "genteel"

style—he shaped into a separate Essay. "That great wit was allied to madness," was also one of the series; but it was dealt with in the same way and for the same reason. There is one very characteristic alteration in his fallacy, "that such a one shows his breeding." A passage ran originally, "that his father was hanged: his sister was made a ——" This seemed to Lamb a little coarse, and it became what it now stands: "his sister, &c." For even before seeing its original shape, it must have struck every reader what a truly humorous generality lurked in that "&c.," and how specially characteristic it is of Lamb's peculiar style.

The original idea of the 'Popular Fallacies' he no doubt found in his loved Sir Thomas Browne's 'Vulgar Errors,' who gravely, and not without an undercurrent of placid irony gravely argues against such delusions as that witches sail about in egg-shells, that the devil is black, has horns, &c. But it almost seems as though he found a yet nearer ideal in the 'Connoisseur' of Bonnell Thornton, who very gaily and lightly deals

almost in the same tone and grave irony as Lamb himself, with the 'Fallacies,' popular in 1750. A specimen or two will show how close is this resemblance. "It is vulgarly supposed," says the 'Connoisseur,'* "'that the events of gaming are regulated by blind chance and fortune;' but the wise and polite—that is, the knowing ones—cannot but smile at the absurdity of this notion; though even the sagacious Hoyle and Demoivre themselves, by the nicety of the calculations of chances, seem to have adopted this ridiculous doctrine." Again: "It is a notion confined not only to the vulgar that 'matrimony brings people together,' but it is notorious that in higher life a marriage is the effectual method to keep them asunder. It is impossible for a man and his wife ever to be seen together in public; and a person of quality would rather enjoy a *tête-à-tête* with anybody's wife but his own. Genteel couples have separate amusements, pay separate visits; keep separate company. . . . On the contrary, if a

* No. 109.

man of fashion has a *tendre* for an unmarried lady they reside in the same house, partake of the same diversions, *and observe every article of the strictest cohabitation. The surest way of dissolving a connection of this sort is to marry.*" These last passages are quite in Lamb's own key. Again: "It may well be called a vulgar error, since none but the vulgar think so, that the Sabbath is a day of rest. It is, as experience teaches, a day of business with some, of pleasure with others, but of rest with none. It is true, indeed, that a cessation from worldly occupations, together with roast beef and plum pudding, were formerly the characteristics of the Sabbath in England; *but these inactive principles* are now entirely out of fashion, nor do I know any person who *is strictly debarred* from exercising his employment on that day, *except the sheriff's officer.*"

Again: "I should hardly attempt to prove so clear and obvious a proposition as that 'there is no such thing in creation as an old woman.' *Old women are*

indeed mentioned by a few writers. . . . In the present distant period we are unable to conceive the least idea of such a creature, as the same appearance of youth's bloom is on the faces of the whole sex. A limner of great business has often declared to me that though he has had several mothers and grandmothers sit to him, *he never yet drew the picture of an old woman.*"

This is certainly the view Lamb would have taken of such subjects, and with some such conceits and phrases would have illustrated his playful refutation. Though relishing 'John Buncle,' said to be one of the books that first hinted 'Tristram Shandy' to Sterne, and though he found and wrote to his friends many a 'Shandyism' on his household, he does not seem to have enjoyed that delightful master of the humorous and pathetical so heartily as might be supposed. Sterne was perhaps a little too new and modern for him. Perhaps he did not know that in one of his letters he was unconsciously quoting from a letter of Sterne's: "I am feeble but cheerful in this hot weather. I can't

read much in the summer-time." We can put by the side of this a scrap from one of Sterne's letters: "There is no sitting and cudgelling one's brains *whilst the sun shines bright.*"

With the 'Elia Essays' the pruning-knife, but only the pruning one, was used very freely to fit them for separate publications. In the light domino and mask of magazine writing he could trust himself with many a familiarity and free jest, which would not comport with the more grave Sabbath air of official publication. Thus at the end of the 'Decay of Beggars' was to be read one of these little easy jests, one of these familiar comments which it were a pity to let die. He scarcely thought it good enough to have a place in one of his letters; but the Goldsmith story is clearly one of those grave literary mystifications to which he was very partial.

In the original shape of this 'Decay of Beggars' was a little bit of humour which may have afterwards seemed too "jaunty" and familiar, but which contains

an incident that happened to himself, and is alluded to in one of his letters.

"'Pray God your honour relieve me,' said a poor beadswoman to my friend L—— one day. 'I have seen better days.'

"'So have I, my good woman,' retorted he, looking up at the welkin, which was just then threatening a storm; and the jest (he will have it) was as good to the beggar as a tester.

"It was at all events kinder than conveying her to the stocks or the parish beadle.

"But he had a way of viewing things in rather a paradoxical light on some occasions."—ELIA.

This is not nearly so well told in the Letters. "An old woman begged of me for charity. 'Ah, sir,' said she, 'I have seen better days;' 'So have I, good woman,' I replied; but I meant, literally, days not so rainy and overcast as that on which she begged; she meant more prosperous." This explanation—for Lamb—seems laborious.

"P.S. My friend Hume (not M.P.) has a curious MS. in his possession—the original draught of the celebrated 'Beggar's Petition' (who cannot say by heart the 'Beggar's Petition?'), as it was written by some school usher (as I remember), with corrections interlined, from the pen of Oliver Goldsmith. As a specimen of the doctor's improvement, I recollect one most judicious alteration—

A pamper'd menial drove me from the door.

It stood, originally,

A livery servant drove me, &c.

"Here is an instance of poetical or artificial language, properly substituted for the phrase of common conversation against Wordsworth."

In the delightful, but most mournful, musical, and melancholy paper on New Year's Eve there is a little alteration worthy of study. Bells, he had said, were the "music *most* bordering upon heaven." How infinitely improved was this, and how much nearer to an

old-fashioned quaintness when he changed it to "nighest bordering upon heaven."

The Garrick Club is, perhaps, not aware that their characteristic gallery has been celebrated by so fine a pen. "There," he says, in a suppressed portion of his papers on the 'Old Actors'—"there hang the players in their single persons and in grouped scenes from the Restoration. The Woffington (a true Hogarth) upon a couch, dallying and dangerous; the screen scene in Brinsley's famous comedy . . . Holman, with the bright glittering teeth in Lothario, and *the deep paviour's sighs* in Romeo. . . . Here hang the two Aickens, brethren in mediocrity. . . . Bensley with the trumpet-tongue, and Little Quick (*the retired Diocletian of Islington*) with his squeak like a Bartholomew fiddle." There, too, was Mrs. Pope, "with a voice which might have competed with the silver tones of Barry, *so enchanting in decay do I remember it;* of all her parts exceeding herself in the Lady Quakeress. *There earth touched* Heaven!" (Lamb was always kindly to the Quakers.) "And Miss

Pope, a gentlewoman ever . . , with Churchill's compliment still burnishing upon her gay honeycomb lips."

But we must indeed lament the kindly sensitiveness —shrinking from any shape of personality—which made him suppress one of the quaintest and most mirthful passages in his writings—a portrait of John Kemble, as he appeared on the first night of a new play. "G——" the unfortunate victim of "John's" stately indifference, was his friend William Godwin. And 'Antonio,' the name of the condemned drama, is not an invented one.

"John had the art of diffusing a complacent dulness over a piece he did not like." This friend of Lamb's, "G——," had written a tragedy, 'Antonio.' "He chose a story affecting, romantic, Spanish; *the plot simple without being naked.* Antonio, *who gives the name to the piece, is a sensitive young Castilian,* who, in a fit of his country honour, immolates his sister.

"But I must not anticipate the catastrophe." What a delightful and solemn gravity in this! The night came

round, and Lamb was present "in an advantageous box." G—— sat "cheerful and confident." The play began and went on drearily for a couple of acts. "John" (Kemble) "*at length appeared, starched out in a ruff, which no one could dispute.* . . . The first acts swept by solemn and silent." At last came the third, when there was promise of business. "A challenge was held forth upon the stage, and there was promise of a fight. The pit roused themselves on this extraordinary occasion, when suddenly Antonio, who was the challenged, turns the tables upon his hot challenger, Don Guzman (*who, by the way, should have had his sister*), and baulks him over with some speeches out of his new Philosophy against Duelling. The audience were here fairly caught; *their courage was up, and on the alert; a few blows, ding dong,* as R——s ("Reynolds") the *dramatist afterwards expressed it to me, might have done the business.* . . . They could not applaud for disappointment; though they would not condemn, for morality's sake. The interest stood stone still, and John's manner

was not at all calculated to unpetrify it. The procession of dulness stalked on through four and five acts, no one venturing to predict what would come of it, when towards the winding up of the latter, *Antonio with an irrelevance that seemed to stagger Elvira herself—for she had been early arguing the point of honour with him*—suddenly whips out a poignard and stabs his sister to the heart. The effect was as if a murder had been committed in cold blood. The whole house rose up in clamorous indignation, demanding justice. The feeling rose far above hisses." Never was the "damning" of a play described with such airy humour. The whole too is founded in perfect truth: for in quite the same fashion was Colman's 'Iron Chest' dealt with, and on another occasion a drama of one of the later Sheridans.

Among the odd answers to correspondents, which was a feature in the 'London,' are some capital bits of true Elia. He would even seem to have been dealt with by the editor, Scott, as one of the crowd. For there is an answer acknowledging one of his papers.

"Two sorts of men" shall be considered. We will, as a learned personage says, "take the papers home with us, and give judgment on a future day." This became later the 'Two Races of Men.' There is also about this time (in the year 1821) a mysterious answer to him from the same quarter. "We respect and sympathize in the feelings of C. L., on the melancholy subject he has chosen for his muse. But he must be aware that circumstances of a very delicate nature must restrain us at present." It is therefore clear that he was not as yet the power in the 'London' that he afterwards became.* A feature of this magazine, and which had a Shandyan tone, was this gossip with correspondents, which was called the 'Lion's Head.'

The quaint, jaunty air of these replies made many suppose that they were Lamb's, and brought out a little notice: "Elia requests us to say, he is *not* the Lion

* Every reader of Talfourd's excellent Biography must have felt how indistinct he is in the matter of dates; comprising long stretches of time under such loose expressions as "About this time," and "This was in 1796," &c.

some of his correspondents take him for." But still Elia himself used now and again to step down into this little enclosure, and have his agreeable banter. Some correspondents had grown curious about Elia and his birthplace, having discovered — and naturally — some contradictions in his own statements. It was quite in keeping with Lamb's character that he should gravely, and with a sense of sham importance, throw out, not strictly *apropos* of anything, an allusion to "the house in Princes Street, Cavendish Square, where we saw the light forty-six years ago, deriving my remoter origin from Italy." Another wished to have this statement reconciled with "my native town" in Wiltshire, *i.e.* Calne, which is mentioned in the 'Christ's Hospital,' and also with the accepted place of his birth given in the 'Old Benchers,' Crown Office Row. One correspondent "who writes himself Peter Ball, or Bell—*for his writing is as ragged as his manners*"—calls attention to this: "Bell clamours upon this, and thinketh he hath caught a fox." "But who does not see," he goes

on, "that in this idle fiction of Genoese ancestry, *I was amusing a fool according to his folly.*" He then comically defends his contradiction in calling Calne his "native town," and says his correspondent "*nicely detects a more subtle distinction, which* Bell was too obtuse to strike upon." "By the word native, I may be supposed to mean a town where I might have been born; or where it might be desirable that I should have been born, as being situate in wholesome air upon a dry, chalky soil, in which I delight." And thus he disposes of "*all such churchwarden critics.*"

Under this disguise he could be very free and daring in his answers. Thus he addresses a correspondent "whose real name is Boldero, but who signs himself Leigh Hunt. This," he says, "is clearly a fictitious appellation; for if we admit the latter of these names to be in a manner English, *what is Leigh?* Christian nomenclature knows no such."

In 'All Fools' Day,' were some more little freedoms. As "Mr. ——, you look wise. Pray correct that error. . . .

Mr. Hazlitt, I cannot indulge you in your definition. I must fine you a bumper or a paradox. We will have nothing said or done syllogistically this day. Remove these logical forms, waiter, &c."

To the account of "Mrs. Battle" were originally added some explanatory notes. Thus the "clean hearth," so necessary for the true enjoyment of whist, is explained: "This was before the introduction of rugs, reader: *you must remember the intolerable crash of the unswept cinder betwixt your foot and the marble*"—a comment that might be well restored to its place, in a new edition. So with the condemnation of those who are content to "win a game and lose a game," an unworthy tone of play, illustrated in a note, "as if a sportsman would like to kill a fox one day and lose him the next."

One of Lamb's peculiarities of style, was an artful and chary use of italics; not in the common way, to give mere blunt *emphasis*, and call the attention of the eye to a special word or sentence, but, as it seems to

me, to convey a sort of *sly, undertone of voice,* and a sudden change to a key of half *solemn and humorous gravity.* But charily as he used italics with this sense, we find them more frequently in the earlier shape of his Essays; and it must be said, not conveying this nice and delicate meaning. Thus in "Mackery End" that beautiful wish about his sister Bridget, that he could "throw into a heap the remainder of our joint existences," was in italics; even to "*but that is impossible;* so too, "*this adopted Bruton,*" and also, "*so Christians should call one another.*"

Even in his titles, time and consideration brought the happiest improvement. Thus "Jews, Quakers, Scotchmen, and other imperfect sympathies," was the almost ungrammatical title of one of his most famous Essays, which in a later shape assumes the more correct and satisfactory title of simply "IMPERFECT SYMPATHIES."

In the list of his "imperfect sympathies" (and what a delicate, old-fashioned turn of phrase—not a *prejudice*

he would say, but a feeling scarcely so developed as his other feelings) is that humorous impatience at the matter-of-fact character of Scotchmen. How humorously, yet not unkindly, he plays with this pleasant antipathy, is known by heart to every reader. The living Elia, too, could not relish the company of that nation. He complains, seriously, that "he could not impress them with any new truth;" and then he told—to Mr. Alsop—of the Scot who sat next him at dinner, and who "could na comprehend" John Buncle's being called a healthy book. But afterwards in the 'London,' on the occasion of the report of his death, he made that nation a sort of *amende.*

On the principle, too, of illustrating obscure passages in the Essays; "there is M****** who goes about dropping his good things as an ostrich lays her eggs, without caring what becomes of them." Perhaps this refers to Manning;* and Hood picked up one of these foundlings, which struck him as being in Lamb's own

* The number of asterisks corresponds with the spelling.

manner. A book called 'A Day in Stowe Gardens,' he said was "a day ill bestowed."

Every one will recollect Sydney Smith's "religious Hoy" which sailed to Margate—a notion that would have delighted Lamb. His picture of the discomforts of the passage is borne out by a curious account in one of the morning papers, very little later than the date of Lamb's voyages—when 'The British Queen' sailing from Billingsgate with a hundred and sixty passengers on board, took seven hours to get down to Gravesend, was there caught in a gale, and after indescribable wretchedness for the hundred and sixty cabin passengers, had to put back, and finally reached "the watering-place" after a passage of forty hours!

I have before mentioned what a help to Lamb's biography are his Essays. They reflect himself. How humorously sensitive he could be on the score of unreturned books, his delightful complaint of Coleridge—a chief transgressor—will recall to every one. We can

here again compare Leigh Hunt, who had exactly the same views as to borrowing and lending of books. "Some people are unwilling to lend their books. I have a special grudge against them, particularly those who accompany their unwillingness with increasing professions to the contrary." A friend taught him, "that it was doing good to all parties to put an ordinary face on the matter."* Coleridge was to be trusted, said Lamb; "he will return them (generally anticipating the time appointed) with usury; enriched with annotations tripling their value. *I have had* experience. Many are those precious MSS. of his (in *matter* oftentimes, and almost in quantity, not unfrequently, vying with the originals,) in no very clerkly hand, legible in my Daniel: in old Burton: in Sir Thomas Browne, and those abstruse cogitations of the Greville, now, alas! wandering in Pagan lands." Now it happens that this very annotated Daniel is still in being, with Coleridge's ardent and genuine admiration written in burning words—giving a

* 'Indicator.' No. 77.

glimpse too of his deplorable state of mind. This was in a sort of letter on the fly-leaf:—

Monday Night, February 9th, 1808.

DEAR CHARLES,

I think more highly, far more, of the 'Civil Wars' than you seemed to do. The verse does not tease me; and all the while I am reading it, I cannot but fancy a plain England-loving, English country gentleman, with only some dozen books in his whole library, and at a time when a 'Mercury' or 'Intelligencer' was seen by him once in a month or two, making this his newspaper and his political bible at the same time, and reading it so often as to store his memory with its aphorisms. Have I improved thy book—or wilt thou like it the better therefore? But I have done as I would gladly be done by—thee at least. O, Charles, I am very ill.

VIXI.

Second Letter five hours after the First.

YOU must read over these 'Civil Wars' again. We both know what a *mood* is. . . . . Do read over—but some evening when we are quite comfortable at your fire, and oh, where shall I ever be if I am not so there?—that is the last altar on which the horns of my old feelings hang.

But alas, listen and tremble! Nonsense! Well, I will read it to you and Mary.

It is curious that in a letter written some twelve or thirteen years before the receipt of his returned

Daniel, he used the same word "enriched." "I wish every book I had," he says, "were so noted. They have thoroughly converted me to relish Daniel." Burton and Sir Thomas Browne were volumes thus "enriched," with an author not alluded to by Lamb—'Donne's Poems.'* A different order of being was that "Cumberbatch" who borrowed but rarely returned books, and left their gaps in the shelves, "scarcely distinguishable but by the quick eye of a loser," or the greater void below, in the folio department, "like an eye-tooth knocked out," where St. Bonaventure had reposed. We do not know who this Skimpole-hearted depredator was. But that "K——" who with his wife, "that part French—better part Englishman"—carried off 'Margaret, Duchess of

* "Donne and Coleridge.—Poems by John Donne, late Dean of St. Paul's, with Elegies on the Author's Death, *portrait by Marshall*, sm. 8vo., *old English morocco gilt, gilt edges, in very nice condition, and a most interesting volume*, having copies of many MS. Critical Notes by S. T. Coleridge, transcribed from a copy of the Poems which belonged to Charles Lamb, 1669, 1*l* 10s."—*From a Bookseller's Catalogue.*

Newcastle,' must have been no other than Kemble, who still "had his play-books and books of jests and fancies to keep him merry," and as Lamb mentions in one of his letters, "a twenty-pound 'Hamlet.'" Most of all should we be glad to see S. T. C.'s notes on "the golden works of the dear, fine, silly, old angel, Fuller," and more than all should we regret that Lamb himself did not follow this practice of "enriching" his own books. Black-letter copies he could not abide, and we can understand the feeling. "It is painful to read," he wrote, declining a present of one. "I have no sympathy with them," he might have added as he did in the instance of the octavo, 'Beaumont and Fletcher.' There is, besides, over black letter a rude and semi-barbarous air, a rawness, as it were, that shocks. But it is different with the primitive look of early-printed books, whose type, and paper, and bindings, remote enough, are mellowed by the process of time like old pictures.

Lamb himself, very often "enriched" other peo-

ple's books, and was often prayed to write verses on fly-leaves. He could do, and as generously, as he was done by. Not very long ago a gentleman found 'John Woodvil' in a bookseller's window, with some verses on the fly-leaf, not included in the collected works.

"WHAT IS AN ALBUM?"

September 7, 1830.

"'Tis a book kept by modern young ladies for show,
Of which their plain grandmothers nothing did know;
A medley of scraps, half verse and half prose,
And some things not very like either, God knows.
The first, soft effusions of beaus and of belles,
Of future Lord Byrons, and sweet L. E. L.'s;
Where wise folk and simple both equally join,
And *you* write your nonsense that I may write mine.
Stick in a fine landscape to make a display—
A flowerpiece, a foreground! all tinted so gay,
As Nature herself, could she see them, would strike
With envy, to think that she ne'er did the like;
And since some Lavaters, with head-pieces comical,
Have agreed to pronounce people's heads physiognomical,
Be sure that you stuff it with autographs plenty,
All penned in a fashion so stiff and so dainty,
They no more resemble folk's ordinary writing,
Than lines penned with pains do extempore writing,

Or our everyday countenance (pardon the stricture)
The faces we make when we sit for our picture;
Then have you, Madelina, an album complete,
Which may *you* live to finish, and I live to see it.

"C. LAMB."*

In his library, too, he had a curiously-annotated book, specimens of which he afterwards copied out and sent to the 'London' with a little note. The book was 'Scott's Critical Essays on some of the Poems of Several English Poets,' a handsome octavo, bought at the sale of Ritson's books, "and *enriched* (or deformed, as some would think it) with MS. annotations; they have proved some amusement to me; and I hope will produce some to the reader *this* rainy season—which *really damps a gentleman's wings.*" And he then gives many specimens which are most characteristic and make very entertaining reading.

The reader will be glad to see a stray letter of his, not "collected," and the like of which is not to be

* From 'Notes and Queries,' a miscellany to which Lamb would have been an eager contributor.

found in any 'complete letter-writer,' under the form of acknowledging books from a publisher. It shows what welcome he could give to the present of a book. He is writing thanks for the 'Maid of Elwar,' by Cunningham, and for Barry Cornwall's songs:—

Thank you for the books. I am ashamed to take tithe thus of your press. I am worse to a publisher than the two universities or the Brit. Mus. 'A. C.' I will forthwith read. 'B. C.' (I can't get out of the A, B, C) I have more than read. Taken together, 'tis too Lovey. But what delicacies! I like most 'King Death. Glorious 'bove all 'The Lady with the Hundred Rings,' 'The Owl,' 'Reply to what's his name' (here, maybe, I'm partial), 'Sit down, sad Soul,' 'The Pauper Jubilee' (but that's old, and yet 'tis never old), 'The Falcon,' 'Felon's Wife,' Damn 'Mdme. Paisley;' but that is borrowed—

Apple pie is very good,
And so is apple pastry;
But—
O Lord, 'tis very naisty—

but chiefly the Dramatic Fragments, scarce three of which should have escaped my specimens had an antique name been prefixed. They exceed his first. So much for the manner of poetry; now to the serious business of life. Up a court (Blandford Court) in Pall Mall, exactly at the back of Marlboro' House, with house-gate in front, and containing two houses, at No. 2 did lately live Leishman, my

tailor. - He is moved somewhere in the neighbourhood—devil knows where. Pray find him out and give him the opposite. I am so much better, though my hand shakes in writing it, that after next Sunday I can see F. and you. Can you throw B. C. in? Why tarry the wheels of my Hogarth?

Lamb, for once, became a "Quarterly Reviewer," to do honour to his friend Wordsworth's 'Excursion.' Readers of his 'Life' will recollect his *genuine* indignation at the fashion in which his work was dealt with by the sober and matter-of-fact editor. It seems to have been literally hacked and mangled: with all the delicate Lamb carving and tracery being hewn away by the editorial "adze." Indeed, it does not seem likely that his grotesque figure, all angles and points, could have ever fitted easily into the square and symmetrical reviewer's chair. And it must be said that what remains of the article after it had been cut down to fit the "regulation" gauge, is far below the average level of ordinary reviewer's articles. No one would ever lay his finger on it, and say that here were stray lumps of rich gold and silver embedded in the common quartz.

It, indeed, runs too much in that partial strain of friendly commendation; and in the admiring platitudes which always betray the hand of the friend. There are, however, a couple of passages where we may recognize, fairly, the tone, if not the style of the old 'Elia:' "If his verses shall be censured as infantine by critics who confound poetry having children for its subject with poetry that is childish: who having themselves, perhaps, never been children, never having possessed the tenderness and docility of that age, know not what the soul of a child is—how inquisitive, how religious."

He does not lose the opportunity of "doing a kindness" to one of his old "golden writers"—just as he might "say a good word" for a living friend. "We breathe the fresh air, as we do while reading Walton's 'Complete Angler,' only the country about us is as much bolder than Walton's, as the thoughts and speculations which form the matter of the poem exceed the trifling pastime and low-pitched conversation of his

humble fishermen." And his partiality for the tranquil nature of the Society of Friends made him discover in the 'Excursion,' "we were almost going to say, the character of *an expanded quakerism.*" No wonder he began to talk indignantly of "Mr. Baviad Gifford" and "Mr. Shoemaker Gifford."

Indeed there seemed to have been almost an awkward fatality about Lamb's relations to the 'Quarterly'—its editor and writers seeming to be driven by some perverse spirit to blunder into some allusion to the skeleton in his household. One of its reviewers had boldly stated that he *knew* that Lamb's grotesque picture of drunkenness was drawn from the writer's own experience. Then came that strange—but, as it turns out, accidental allusion in a review, where a book is described as "polluted by the blasphemies of a poor maniac. For this unfortunate creature every feeling mind will find an apology in his calamitous situation." This passage has been treated with extraordinary severity, as being a gross and malignant reference to the known

infirmity in Lamb's family. "It would be difficult as well as painful," says Lamb's biographer, "to characterize it as it deserves." And in his natural warmth in his friend's cause he hints—almost with equal licence—at the reviewer's "small but acute mind," and at peculiarities "*aggravated by bodily weakness and disease.*" It is true that Gifford was often unscrupulous where politics were concerned; but justice requires that an explanation should be given, of the matter, which, perhaps, should have found a place in later editions of the memorials published during Talfourd's lifetime. Gifford was innocent in the matter. He wrote in an agony of horror when he heard of how the unlucky passage was applied. He was inexpressibly shocked, and declared solemnly that he had never heard that there was the slightest trouble of that kind in Lamb's family. He knew nothing—as was indeed probable—of his domestic affairs. He would "sooner have had his right hand cut off." The passage, too, is indeed, notwithstanding Talfourd's apology for it, rather profane;

and, in those days of youthful infidelity, must have appeared blasphemous at least, to the eyes of gaunt and rigid Toryism. "I call God to witness," wrote Gifford, "I never heard one syllable of Mr. Lamb or of his family." This may be accepted as true. The insanity referred to by him is the insanity of doctrine rather than of constitution.

Lamb himself seems to have understood the matter so, and accepted it in this sense. No man could have forgiven so malignant an insinuation. Later again, his friend Southey had unconsciously blundered into another allusion, had written "*saner* religious feeling" for sounder, and it had nearly been printed.

By-and-by he was on the staff of 'Blackwood's Magazine,' and was dotting its pages with little airy sonnets, signed with his delicate "C. L." Some of them are not included in his collected works, as the "Lines written in consequence of hearing of a young man that had voluntarily starved himself to death on Skiddaw." But a more important contribution, which

I think has not been enough noticed, is one entire farce, which figures a little inappropriately in one of the numbers. It is called "The Pawnbroker's Daughter." The plot, it must be said, is a little forced, and the humour rather in the tone of the old dramatists. It turns upon a pawnbroker's daughter running away; and on a sentimental butcher called "Cutlet," who says, "Reach me down the book off the shelf where the shoulder of veal hangs!" but, most curiously, it has the original draught of the later Essay, 'On the Inconveniences of being Hanged,' in a character called "Pendulous," a situation which seems to have struck him in some specially humorous light. There is this difference, however, that the lady he loves is anxious to put herself on a perfect equality, by being arrested and tried; and there is something of Lamb's jerking humour in the following finish to the play:—

Just. (*to Pendulous*).—You were, then, tried at York?
Pen.—I was—CAST.
Just.—Condemned?
Pen.—EXECUTED.

Just.—How?

Pen.—CUT DOWN AND CAME TO LIFE AGAIN. False delicacy adieu. . . . . We are now on even terms.

Miss F.—And may—

Pen.—Marry;—I know it was your word.

Miss F.—And make a very quiet—

Pen.—Exemplary—

Miss F.—Agreeing pair of—

Pen.—ACQUITTED FELONS!

In this of course will be recognized another shape of 'The Inconvenience of being Hanged.'

It is said that there is almost a better appreciation of Lamb in America than in England: certainly the best sort of American humour has a faint savour of Lamb's grotesque turn of mind. He would at least have relished some of Mr. Holmes's odd conceits. 'Mr. H.,' Lamb's "damned" farce, found its way to the new country, and has been acted in several American cities, causing the greatest merriment wherever played. If 'Mr. H.' were compressed into one act, and "touched" carefully by one skilled in the stage, it would beyond question give great delight to an audience of the present

day. No manager would lose by it. The first night would be a sort of festival. The few who knew Lamb would be in the boxes, the thousands who read and admire Lamb would crowd to the house and see with delight a tardy *amende* paid to their favourite. Those who neither knew nor read would come out of curiosity, knowing that there was to be something good. Mr. Wigan or Mr. Buckstone might well find their account in this step. Compared with the vile "romping" of a modern farce, and the childish quips which are the staple of a modern farce, the humour of 'Mr. H.' reads like the mellow humour of the old dramatists. It is firm and bold, and, unlike the frail "fun" of a farce, is independent of ephemeral jokes and transient topics. What made an American audience laugh might surely have the same effect upon an English one. It is not perhaps known, too, that most of Lamb's books and papers have passed over into America. Some time before Mr. Moxon's death, a "sharp" gentleman of that country talked to him of the idolatry with which

Lamb's memory and writings were regarded in his country, and persuaded the publisher that no greater homage could be paid to that memory than to allow these relics to pass into their custody. On which specious representation the books were actually sent, and are now in some library in America.

In another of his suppressed passages, as we may call them, we have a characteristic little incident connected with this "damning" of 'Mr. H.' A few nights after this misfortune he was at the theatre door, in the midst of a large crowd, "jostling in with me to have a sight of Master Betty in *Hamlet*. I happened to have in my hand a large octavo of Johnson and Stevens' Shakespeare. . . . Just in the very heat and pressure of the doors opening—the *rush*, as they term it —I deliberately held the volume over my head . . . and quietly read by the lamp-light. The clamour became universal. 'The affectation of the fellow,' cried one. Still I read on. The individual rabble (I recognised more than one of their ugly faces)

had damned a slight piece of mine a few nights before."

Very few are perhaps aware that Charles Lamb was joint author with "Brinsley" and Thomas Sheridan, of a sort of comic opera. The whole is in Lamb's writing; and there can be no question but that this is the piece referred to by Miss Lamb in a letter, where she speaks of what she calls "a pantomine." It is in the 'Duenna' manner, and the following is the cast of the characters.*

CHARACTERS OF THE OPERA.

LOVELACE.	A man of fortune—refused by Violeta—enlists for a soldier and goes for Gibraltar.
MAJOR APTJONES.	A Welshman } Officers of the Garrison.
CAPTAIN LOTHIAN.	A Scotsman }
BLOOMER.	Aide-de-camp to the Governor—an admirer of Caroline, but a flatterer of Mrs. Lupelle.
CAPTAIN LUPELLE.	An officer — who comes with his Lady from England to join the Garrison.
GOVERNOR.	
HALBART.	A Serjeant.

* The play itself is now in the British Museum.

DRUMMER.
JUDGE ADVOCATE.
CLERKS, SOLDIERS, &c.

LADIES.

MRS. LUPELLE.	Wife of Captain Lupelle—who encourages the addresses of Bloomer.
CAROLINE.	A young lady in love with Bloomer.
VIOLETA.	In the character of an officer—follows Lovelace to Gibraltar.
SISSE.	Her servant—habited as a foot-boy.

TRULLS, &c.

Scene—Gibraltar.

The 'London' represented a curious set, as indeed may be gathered from its clever articles; and there were meetings known as "Magazine Dinners," when the "set" met together and formed a curious miscellany. Among them were Kenney, the farce writer; Cary, of Dante reputation; Clare, the Northamptonshire poet, actually in his peasant's dress. For him cheese and ale were provided. The conversation never flagged a moment, passing from wit to wisdom, and from wisdom to buffoonery. Kenney would break in upon the serious talk of the graver pundits with broad jests, to be

followed by Lamb with some outrageous "schoolboy" puns; and once a line from a rare old dramatist only produced an irreverent round of puns, which brought in the names of various odd herbs. It had gone round regularly, and each had solemnly tried his hand in turn. Mint and anise had been thus dealt when it came to Cary's turn. "N—now," stammered Lamb. "It's *coming*," the other answered promptly. "Then I shan't make another pun to-day after that," said Lamb. This scene is beyond a doubt what was in Lamb's mind when he wrote his 'Fallacy,' "that the worst puns are the best." "Who has not at one time or other been at a party of professors (*himself perhaps an old offender in that line*), where, after ringing a round of the most ingenious conceits, every man contributing his shot, and some there the most expert shooters of the day, suddenly some obscure, unthought-of fellow in the corner has all at once come out with something so whimsical that it has proved a Robin Hood's shot; anything *ulterior to that is despaired of*, and the party breaks up, unanimously voting it to be

the worst, etc." These dinners must have been pleasant festivals; and it strikes one forcibly, as we look down the roll of guests, what a different *class* of writing and subject was then needed to make up a magazine. Names like Elia, Cary, Procter, Cunningham, Bowring, Barton, Hazlitt, Elton, Hartley Coleridge, Talfourd, Soane, Horace Smith, Reynolds, Poole, and Clare; and each of these had a *character* of his own, traceable in his writings as well as in himself. It must have been a feature, looking at another of these London dinners with the eyes of Thomas Hood, to have seen Clare in his "grass-green coloured coat" and yellow waistcoat, like a stage peasant, sitting next Elia, and "dal-ling," (his favourite oath of final condemnation) the restraints of Lindley Murray. We can hear Elia dwelling on the "sharp tangential turn" in Montgomery's poem, "O, she was fair!" Lamb fancied the oddities of this poet and peasant, and used to walk with him through London arm in arm. No wonder people, having then their eyes on those strange coloured plates of the doings of "Tom

and Jerry," should take the odd gentleman in black and his green friend for a couple of "noble Corinthians," and call out after them, "Look at Tom and Jerry!" It is said that the genteel footman at houses where Clare was taken to be lionized, cut him off at the door—not unnaturally—as he entered last, taking him for an intruder, though he afterwards made amends by waiting on him as a sort of eccentric of high birth.

There was there with Clare and Cunningham the giant, a smart active figure with "a game-cock-looking head," and who was Herbert, so smart with a jest or repartee, with tongue or pen. We hear Lamb pledging his peasant neighbour very often as "Clarissimus!" and "Princely Clare!" and rallying him on what he called "Clare obscurities" in his verses. But this pleasant meeting was soon dispersed, and the contributors fell away.

The peasant often told afterwards of Elia's odd first reception of him. He was sitting with his tobacco-pipe and a great snuff-box on his left hand, into which he used to dip frequently. He was in outrageous spirits,

and began to make puns "on poets and hackney-coaches," sipping from his tumbler all the time. At last Miss Lamb came in with good-natured expostulation, only to be met by Lamb's boisterous reply, "Do we not know the value of a rustic swain—I mean of res—restraint?" Clare afterwards saw him with the "London" writers, and noticed his dislike to the two Scotchmen, De Quincey and Cunningham.

Sometimes for a change of scene they went down together to a Chiswick parsonage, concerning which the tradition ran that it was once tenanted by Hogarth. Cary and Cary's son—"Caryatides," was Lamb's name for him, who recommended his being made an apothe*cary*—were always of these parties.* It must have been charming to have heard Lamb bringing out his outrageous puns, which it is said received excellent point from his stammer causing him to hesitate more and more as he drew near the emphatic word, and this little suspension made it come out with short,

* These are Hood's recollections.

sharp effect, like the sound of a pistol shot. He would take a great deal of wine, not after, but *at* dinner, and sometimes fell into a pleasant doze.

Once it was reported officially in the 'London' that "Elia was dead;" but it was speedily contradicted. Then it was that he wrote his curious paper on his own death, like all the others, much altered and modified in a new shape. It furnishes him with a text, and he conjured up a vision of his friends hearing the news in the dining-room of T. and H. "The gentle P——r (Procter) signified his intention of devoting an elegy, and Allan C. (Cunningham), nobly forgetful of his country's wrongs, vowed a memorie to his manes."

Gallantly did the little "set" of the 'London' rally round him when he was attacked in the 'Quarterly.' "Messieurs the 'Quarterly Reviewers' chose to affirm that he partly sat for his own picture. It is indeed a compound extracted out of his long observations of the effects of drinking upon all the world about him." They do not deny that "a portion of his own experiences

may have passed into the picture (as who that is not a washy fellow but must at some time have felt the after operation of a too generous cup?), but then how heightened, how exaggerated." Then they proceed to deal with the high Tory organ in the lawful amenities of those days. "But it is useless," they go on, "to expostulate *with this 'Quarterly' slime, brood of Nile's watery heads with hearts of jelly.* Elia shall string them up one day." Later, Elia did string them up, and this was the menace of that angry letter to Southey.

A sort of catalogue *raisonné* of the contents of the magazine with which Elia was so connected, will perhaps not be unwelcome here.

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A good deal of the little details of Lamb's early schoolboy days, as given in the 'Life,' is founded on a letter of Southey's to Talfourd. It seems that hardly full force has been given to these recollections; for Southey is more positive about some points than Lamb's biographer would represent him. Thus Southey seems certain about Lamb's having a share in White's 'Falstaff Letters.' The poems of Lamb's father were in quarto: and the 'Sparrow's Wedding,' which the son used to read to him in his dotage, perhaps gave him most pleasure because it was the longest of the collection. Southey recollected the family once lodging near Lincoln's Inn, just out of Holborn, and evidently "in uncomfortable circumstances." The house has since been pulled down, to make room for a church. He also throws a little additional light on Lamb's later quarrel, or rather misunderstanding, with the poet. It will be recollected it was on the score of a passage in the 'Quarterly,' which lamented that there was not a *sounder* religious feeling in the Essays of Elia. Southey

explained that this was a hasty word substituted for another not so suitable, and intended to have been further amended at the first moment of leisure. Southey thought that Lamb took the matter to heart on account of such a remark interfering with the sale of the book. It was likely to be sufficiently offensive on more obvious grounds; but with Lamb it was easy making up such a quarrel. Many have wondered what was the expunged word. Southey had written "a *saner* religious feeling." After what had taken place in Lamb's family, a moment's reflection showed him the awkwardness of this word, and he struck it out. Still this seems to take away the good faith of Southey's apology; for it is thus clear that the idea in his mind was that the Essays *were* deficient in religion, either sane or sound.

We know enough now of Lamb's fondness for introducing personal matter into his writings to accept as true a little account of infant school days, and which seems all but biographical. It is a graceful little

sketch, as good as anything in the official Elia. It was suggested by an old book, the sure charm to kindle his fancy and meditations into enthusiasm.

Hone had described, and pleasantly described, the memoirs of Captain Starkey, "a fine uncut copy of which was *penes me*" (a favourite expression of Lamb's), and which in a few numbers after brought out some of his delightful "drollery." From it we find that both he and his sister went to a school where Starkey had been usher about a year before they came to it—a room that looked into "a discoloured, dingy garden in the passage leading from Fetter Lane into Bartlett's Buildings. This was close to Holborn—and Queen Street, where he lived as a boy, was in Holborn. This minuteness as to locality, as he himself might say, gives a sort of probability. Bird was described as an "eminent writer," who taught mathematics, which was no more than "ciphering." "Heaven knows what languages were taught there. I am sure that neither my sister nor myself brought any out of it but a little of our

native English. It was in fact an humble day-school." Bird and Cook, he says, were the masters. Bird had "that peculiar mild tone—especially when he was inflicting punishment—which is so much more terrible to children than the angriest looks and gestures. Whippings were not frequent; but when they took place, the correction was performed in a private room adjoining, whence we could only hear the plaints, but saw nothing. This heightened the decorum and solemnity." He then described the ferrule—"that almost obsolete weapon now," and "the malignancy, in proportion to the apparent mildness with which its strokes were applied. To make him look more formidable—if a pedagogue had need of these heightenings—Bird wore one of those flowered Indian gowns formerly in use with schoolmasters, the strange figures upon which we used to interpret into hieroglyphics of pain and suffering." This is in Lamb's most delightful vein. So, too, with other incidents of the school, especially, "our little leaden ink-stands, not separately subsisting, but sunk

into the desks;" and the agonizing benches on which we were all cramped together and yet encouraged to attain a free hand, unattainable in this position." Lamb recollected even his first copy, "Art improves Nature," and could look back with "pardonable pride to his carrying off the first premium for spelling. Long after, certainly thirty years, it was still going on, only he found out a Latin inscription over the entrance in the Lane, unknown in our humbler days." In the evening was a short attendance for girls, to which Miss Lamb went, and she recollected the theatricals even, Cato being performed by the young gentlemen. "She describes the cast of the characters even now with relish. *Martha*, by the handsome Edgar Hickman, who afterwards went to Africa, and of whom she never afterwards heard." Allowing something for Lamb's fondness for mystification, there is an air of probability over these details. He was not shy either in alluding to the incidents of his childhood. The whole is a delightful sketch, more delightful from its being written

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with an enjoyable absence of all responsibility for his friend Hone's book.*

Connected with this school may have been one formal, grey-haired, elderly lady, who had some defect in utterance, and who was a pensioner of his for thirty pounds a year. She was said to have been his old schoolmistress. She recollected Goldsmith: who had once lent her his Poems to read. This is an instance of his charity that deserves record; and though he affected to dislike all stinginess and putting by, his was of the nature of that sublime stinginess of the poor charity-boy he has described in his paper on Christ Church Hospital.

Indeed his true charity was marvellous. During one period of his life he had no less than three pensioners on his bounty. When the loss of Coleridge was clouding

* Those who would see how two masters in humour can treat the same subject, should put beside it a little essay of Mr. Dickens', entitled, 'Our School,' and where is the infinitely diverting history of the white mouse, which was "kept by the boys in the cover of a Latin Dictionary," and who, "mistaking his way in a procession to the capitol, fell into a deep *inkstand, was dyed black, and drowned.*"

his spirits, he sought out the nurse that attended his last moments, and gave her five pounds.

It has been supposed that all these recollections referred to himself. But this is a mistake. The "poor, friendless boy, who never went home," whose parents were far away down at "sweet Calne," in Wiltshire, was Samuel T. Coleridge: Lamb's parents lived in London. Coleridge looked back very dismally to their school-days; mentions the "gag," or dreadful fat boiled beef, against which there was such a reasonable prejudice in the school; and quite corroborates Lamb's account of the natural wonder of the scholar at the *grateful* character of their grace. For the cheer on certain days was not more than bread-and-butter and milk-and-water. And as Coleridge said, except on Wednesday "we rarely had a bellyful." The boys had a rhyme describing the order and succession of their food:—

Monday, all saints,
Tuesday, all souls;
Wednesday, all trenchers,
Thursday, all bowls, &c.

Coleridge was a "Grecian," when Lamb was a "Deputy-Grecian."

From another of his scattered sketches we pick a little bit of colouring for these old school days. "What is gone," he asks, as a correspondent of friend Hone's journal—"what is gone with the cages, formerly an indispensable appendage to a tinman's shop, and were, in fact, the only live signs? One, we believe, still hangs out in Holborn. But we remember, at school, getting our fingers into the orangery of one of these little gentry, and the result proved sourer than lemons."

In these days too he used to meet—and meet with awe and mystery—that old reduced Windsor knight, Sir Jeffery Dunstan, "returning of an evening, after his long day's itinerary, to his domicile—a wretched shed in the most beggarly portion of Bethnal Green, a little on this side the Mile End turnpike. No graphic pen can convey an idea of the general squalor of his appearance *and of his bag* (*his constant concomitant*) *in particular*."

At Christ's were the two Le Grices, both known to Leigh Hunt. The younger became a soldier, and was the maddest of all the greater boys, full of wild spirits, yet not without address. It was he who sent Leigh Hunt for a bottle of water, which he proceeded gravely to pour down the back of another boy; and it was he who coolly gave as an excuse for not doing an exercise, "that he had a lethargy," an excuse accepted from sheer amazement. The elder—Lamb's "C. V. L." —was more staid, but a little of a wag, also.

Leigh Hunt at Christ's recollected Dyer passing through the school to the library, "where no other person in town clothes appeared." This circumstance struck the school with a mysterious wonder.

The school, too, had produced an ambassador; but he was known, to the infinite disgust of the scholars, to be ashamed of the place of his education. One now alive * recollects perfectly Doctor Trollope, the master; and Baron Field, who went to New South Wales. At

* Mr. Peter Cunningham.

the "London" dinners it soon was noticed how Baron Field was always talking of his magisterial days in the colony. He was the first person who published poems in that colony, and chose for *his* motto—

> I first adventure, follow me who list,
> And be the second Austral harmonist.

But a soldier came later with *his* motto—

> I the second take the field,
> The next may something better yield:

a familiarity that annoyed the first poet.

When he came to the India House—we can know something too of his friends there, from another suppressed passage in the 'London.'

They included "Woodruffe and Wissel, and Peter Corbet (a descendant and worthy representative, bating the point of sanctity of old facetious Bishop Corbet), and Hoole, who translated Tasso, and Bartlemy Brown, whose father (God assoil him therefor!) modernized Walton, and the warm-hearted old Jack Cole (King

Cole they called him in those days), and Camp, and Jack Burrell, the *bon vivant* of the South Sea House, and little Eyton (said to be a fac-simile of Pope—he was a miniature of a gentleman) who was cashier under him, and Dan Voight of the Custom House, who kept the library."

We can also see him at his desk in the India House. "I write," he says to Mr. Cottle, "with accelerated motion, for I have two or three bothering clerks and brokers who always press in proportion as you seem to be doing something that is not business. I could exclaim a little profanely, but I think you do not like swearing." Yet he has given these "bothering clerks and brokers" a high character in one of the suppressed portions of his Essays. "There was more wit, more discourse, more shrewdness, and even talent, among these clerks (he would say) than in twice the number of authors by profession that I have conversed with."

When a pleasant antiquarian gossiper shall take up old inns and taverns for a subject—and it is surprising

how such a theme could have escaped the cozy treatment of Leigh Hunt—he must not pass by the old "Salutation" Inn, which Lamb frequented. His readers and lovers—convertible words in his case—will recall the affectionate yearning with which he looked back to "the Salutation nights," when he and Coleridge repaired to that tavern, and sat together, while the poet talked his ardent transcendentals, and showed misty glimpses of heaven to the enthusiastic young clerk. No one would now choose the "Salutation" as a scene for the discussion of such high themes as poesy, or theology, or transcendentalism. With the era of clubs, philosophers ceased to frequent such inconvenient places for discussion as taverns, like the "Mitre," so loved by Johnson and Boswell.

Often and often he recurred to those happy nights when they sat together until long past midnight, which seem to have had a charm beyond all other nights. "I imagine to myself the little smoky room at the 'Salutation and Cat,' where we have sat together through

the winter nights, beguiling the cares of life with poesy." The "Old Salutation" nights come back to him again, and the music of Coleridge's eloquence, and the envious visions that wonderful fancy called up over the "egg-flip" and Oronooko. Even in his preface his eyes wandered back, "so far as those old suppers at our old inn, when life was fresh and topics exhaustless," and before—he might have added—the great poet had fallen into his habit of delivering endless and weary monologues.

It is said, even, that the landlord, though unable to follow the Pantisocracy and other transcendental themes of his guests, could plainly see that his guest was a man of genius, and was delivering great truths with a surprising fluency; and when Coleridge was leaving the place on his marriage, offered him free quarters if he would only continue to talk on for the good of the house.

Such a haunt must have an interest for all lovers of Charles Lamb. There are two "Salutation" inns—one

in Tavistock Street, Covent Garden, and at the corner of Tavistock Court—one side of which, however, at the back of the new Flower Market, has been clean swept away to clear the ground for some new Covent Garden improvements — is a very dirty and dingy-looking tavern, with many "blind" windows, and its lower portion evidently remodelled even years ago, after the true tenth-rate "public-house" pattern, with a tarnished brewer's show-board spread across its front. It has none of the staring glories which modern taverns delight in, but a special mouldiness and shabby air of its own, which is alone remarkable. This, though there is a popular idea in the neighbourhood to that effect, is not Lamb's. That is to be found a long way off, near Smithfield, at No. 17, Newgate Street. It still flourishes. But there are old memories kept up here of Lamb and Coleridge.

There is a tradition, too, that when St. Paul's was building, the famous architect, Sir Christopher, used to repair there to have his "quiet pipe." The odd sign

in this place has been a welcome subject of discussion with antiquarians, and many explanations have been suggested for "The Salutation and Cat." Mr. Smith—"Rainy-day Smith"—knew a "Jemmy Yerrell," who kept the rival "Salutation" in Tavistock Court, and who had taken down the old sign that swung over his door, and could describe it. It was a very quaint and characteristic one, representing two gentlemen in very full, flowing wigs, and with enormous flapped pockets, large enough "to hold a folio ledger," pulling off their hats to each other with elaborate politeness, one offering the other a pinch of snuff. The Cat is supposed by some to be a sort of canè with a snuff-box fitted to its top, which one of the gentlemen is offering to his friend, and called "a Cat." Others hold it to be a notice that a game called "Cat" is played there, like "The Cow (*and Skittles*);" and some, again, that it has a religious meaning.

One of the best pictures in 'Elia is that of Blakesmoor in ——shire, which Talfourd tells us was the

seat of the Plumers, in Hertfordshire, where his maternal grandmother had been housekeeper. Mr. Patmore has given the real name of this Blakesmoor, where he himself had been on a visit with Plumer Ward, a politician of feeble ability, and a weak novelist, who has been honoured with two stout volumes of biography. It is Gilston in Hertfordshire, an old Elizabethan mansion, to which Lamb—admirably picturesque and romantic as is his description—scarcely did justice. There was colour enough in it to furnish him with a yet more perfect and romantic sketch; for very few can be aware that a house so perfect in details, and so exactly representing the old times in its furniture and fittings, is to be found in the possession of any private person in England. From the Plumers it had passed into the possession of Mr. Ward, who had thoroughly and conscientiously restored it. All the furniture and pictures had been kept together, and the house and gardens, though dilapidated and neglected, could at any time have been repaired and put in order.

It seems very strange, then, that Lamb should have imported into his sketch that element of the owner levelling the old house to the ground: "A few bricks only lay as representatives of that which was so stately and spacious;" with a *genuine* mourning over the old walls overthrown, which jars on us a little when we think that the whole is a mere theatrical regret, brought in merely to give a greater effect to the picture.*

It was of solid red brick, making two sides of a square, with old trees, and an old-fashioned wall and heavy quaint iron gates; and in the walls were niches with figures of Wolsey and Henry VIII. Above, there was a whole wilderness of gables and chimneys, clock-turrets, and weathercocks, with statues and busts everywhere. Another front rose upon the edge of a lake, whose opposite bank was covered with odd-shaped trees

* It may be, however, that Lamb saw the place when Mr. Ward was restoring it, and had seen the débris scattered about, which may have suggested the idea of total demolition, or perhaps the rumour of the restorations had been magnified into total destruction. This seems the most probable, for he mentions how he *had heard* that the owner had lately pulled it down.

and grotesque trunks of trees. Beyond was the noble park and the walls and drives of the park, and hundreds of deer. To this sheet of water Lamb attaches a pretty delusion of awe-struck childhood—that the trees hid a deep and mysterious lake, whose extent he shrank from investigating for fear it would overthrow his fancies. The 'Dream Children'—that charming reverie—contains genuine biographical details hitherto overlooked, and a capital portrait of John Lamb. We have there more facts about the old house, which he places in Norfolk, but with still the same owner. A Plumer, he said, had deserted it for a more fashionable mansion; had stripped off and carried away all the old ornaments, and nearly pulled it down. There had been a carved oak chimney-piece in the great hall, with the legend of the 'Children in the Wood and the Cruel Uncle,' "the whole story, down to the Robin Redbreasts," wrought out properly; which were all rudely taken down and replaced by a new marble one. But the 'Children in the Wood and the Cruel Uncle'

were only more of Lamb's pleasant fancies; for the black oak carvings remained when he wrote, and represented boar and stag hunts, etc. The great rambling mansion was left to Lamb's maternal grandmother, who was mistress more than housekeeper, and not at all disturbed of nights by the apparition of the Two Infants, who were said to be seen gliding up and down the great staircase. This then was that "haunted room in which old Mrs. Battle died;" and Mrs. Battle herself was clearly a portion of the memory of the old housekeeper. This could be easily followed out, beginning with that legacy of the Florentine cribbage-board which came to her from John Plumer.

The noble outer hall was thirty feet square, almost encumbered with armour and weapons and the pedigrees and 'scutcheons' which so dwelt on the memory of Lamb; with the wonderful heraldic window which contained all the coats of arms of the branches of the family. And there, too, was the pole of the Royal Standard of Scotland won in battle.

"The noble marble hall" held the twelve heads of the Cæsars, and was the most striking thing in the place. Those who have seen the Cæsars in the Vatican will quite understand the strange fascination these life-like portraits, whose expression is so varied, would have for a child like Lamb. He recurs to them very often. There too was the noble stair, and the rich collection of pictures—Charles II., Henrietta Maria, Swift, Bolingbroke, Mary of Medicis, the Duke of Hamilton, and Fighting Spinosa. Lamb dreams of a "Beauty with the cool blue pastoral drapery and a lamb—that hung next the great bay window—with the bright yellow H——, olive hair, and eye of watchet hue: *so like my Alice.*" Even this we can identify as a beautiful young and pensive portrait of a Charlotte Cotton, leaning her cheek on her hand, with a sad inscription: "She was a pale primrose that died unmarried." It was by Sir Peter; and as Mr. Ward, the owner, said, who had never seen or heard of Lamb's Essay, "*it makes one in melancholy love with her.*" Here, too, was plenty

of "old china," which had so worked itself into the "sympathies" of Lamb even for this early age: in short, a "darling" compendium—the best bit of scenery that could fix itself on a young mind, and colour it for the future.

In his relation to William Hone—the chatty and entertaining compiler of the 'Every Day' and 'Table Books'—Lamb comes out pleasantly. It was a sort of "Athenian oracle," or, better still, the "current notes" of the day; and there were correspondents who wrote and answered each other. The grateful dedication is worth preserving apart:—

To Charles Lamb, Esq.

DEAR L.,

Your letter to me, written the first two months from the commencement of the present work, approving my notice of St. Chad's Well, and you afterwards daring to publish me your "friend" with your proper name annexed, *I shall never forget.* Nor can I forget your and Miss Lamb's sympathy and kindness when glooms outmastered me; and that *your pen* spontaneously sparkled in the book when my mind was in clouds and darkness. These "trifles," as each of you would call them, are benefits scored upon my heart; and I dedicate this volume to you and Miss Lamb with affectionate respect.

W. HONE.

This speaks of a world of kindly and delicate acts, and very likely of pecuniary aid. With the good personality, which was a feature of his time, Hone brought them on in the very first month of his book :— "Yet Bridget and Elia live in our own times; she full of kindness to all, and of soothings to Elia especially; he no less kind and consoling to Bridget, in all simplicity holding converse with the world, and ever and anon giving us scenes that Motteux and Defoe would admire, and portraits that Denner and Hogarth would rise from their graves to paint."

In the 'Table Book' he wrote the well-known 'Specimens;' and his little note to "friend Hone," introducing them, is in his own airy key. "Imagine," he says, speaking of himself in the British Museum, "the luxury to one like me . . . of *sitting* in the princely apartments, for such they are, of poor condemned Montague House, which I predict will not be speedily followed by a handsomer; and calling at will the flower of some thousand dramas. It is like having

the range of a nobleman's library, with the librarian to your friend." (Mark, *to* your friend.) "Nothing can exceed the courteousness and attentions of the gentleman who has the chief direction of the reading-rooms here; and you have scarce to ask for a volume before it is laid before you." These were happy days indeed for the readers.

It turned out a delusion, but he thought it would have been a treat for "friend HONE." Another instance of Lamb's tender delicacy, as he knew Hone had been already pleased at being called "friend" by him.

He is "brought out" by an allusion to Sir Jeffrey Dunstan, whom he had met and seen at his dwelling. "A strong odour of burnt bones, I remember, blending with the scent of horse-flesh reeking into dog's meat, and only relieved a little by the breathings of a few brick-kilns, made up the atmosphere." This is one of Lamb's wonderful "gatherings" of oddness; and even the quaint position of the words "I remember," is

worthy of study. "If a few boys followed him," he goes on, "it seemed rather from habit than in expectation of fun. . . . What faults he had I know not. I have heard something of a peccadillo or so. But some little deviations from the precise line of rectitude might have been winked at in so tortuous and stigmatic a frame."

Later on he furnishes a little ramble, "*In re* Squirrels," beginning—"Be it remembered that C. L. comes here and represents his relations," asking, "what is gone with the cages, with the climbing squirrel, and bells to them, which were formerly the indispensable appendage to the outside of a tinman's shop, and were, in fact, the only live signs? One, we believe, still hangs out in Holborn; but they are fast vanishing with the good old modes of our ancestors."

A correspondent, Tim Tims, gossiping about the ass, brings out Lamb again to plead for this suffering servant. Nature did prudently "in furnishing him with a tegument impervious to ordinary stripes. . . . His back offers no mark to a puny foeman. To a

common whip or switch his side presents an absolute insensibility. . . . His jerkin is well fortified. . . . Contemplating this natural safeguard, his fortified exterior, it is with pain I view the sleek, foppish, combed, and curried person of this animal, as he is transmuted and disnaturalized at watering-places, &c., where they affect to make a palfrey of him. Fie on all such sophisticating. It will never do, Master Groom! Something of his honest shaggy exterior will peep up in spite of you—his good, rough, native pineapple coating."

Pineapple coating! How truly after Lamb's mind, the deceit in suggesting an agreeable image, which, on a second's reflection, shows us quite a different idea. Nothing, too, is more remarkable in him than his airy and special use of the "&c."

Next, we have a little snatch of verse, called 'Rural Musings':—

Margaret.—What sports do you use in the forest?
Simon.—Not many. Some few, as thus:—
To see the sun to bed and to arise,
Like some hot amorist, with glowing eyes.

There are others of Lamb's friends, of whom we have indeed sketches in the 'Life,' but about whom we shall be glad to learn a little more.

That Miss Isola, who stands out so charmingly in his letters, who married Mr. Moxon the publisher, makes one of the prettiest pictures in Lamb's circle. With his touching she comes out a perfect Watteau, or Lancret figure. Some of his most airy and delightful sportings—especially in regard to the new watch, of which she had "kissed away half-past twelve" —are about her. We have a very pretty glimpse of her in a letter to Mrs. Shelley, "I am teaching Emma Latin, to qualify her for a *superior governesship*, which we see no prospect of her getting. . . . Sisyphus, his labours, were as nothing to it. Actives and passives jostle in her nonsense, till a deponent enters, like chaos, more to embroil the fray. . . . Her prepositions are suppositions. . . . Her interjections are purely English, "Ah!" and Oh!" within a yawn and a gape, in the same tongue, and she herself is a lazy blockheadly supine.

To her the bridegroom wrote many of his sonnets—rather Della Cruscan in tone—with a gallantry that belongs more to the age of Sir Philip Sidney than to our own prosy times. When these sonnets appeared, on Mr. Moxon's marriage, they were noticed in a strangely familiar way, by a jaunty reviewer—likely to have been Mr. Upcott—in 'The Gentleman's Magazine,' —a "friendly" style that however is almost offensive:—

"As we were passing the other day down Dover Street, *nescio quid meditans nugarum*, on coming opposite to a respectable-looking house on the sinistral side of the street, we heard a strange repetition of monosyllabic words; and on stopping for a moment distinctly caught the voice of a person who appeared walking rapidly up and down the room, crying, '*hand, land, stand, fann'd, plann'd, strand;* that will do, I only want six:' then he recommenced, '*plough, brow, now:* this is a bad word for rhyming (this was said *sotto voce*), I must get another; *grave, wave, save, cave,* &c.' . . . When this volume reached us the mystery was now

revealed; it proved to be Mr. Moxon in the very act of concocting one of his sonnets, twenty-eight of which are now by his kindness before us."

And a fanciful and delicate sonnet to Miss Isola is thus introduced, with a freedom that would scarcely be tolerated now.

"It would appear that Cupid and Apollo are both leading him to the hill of fame, and as '*omnia tulit amor*,' we will begin with the description of a person whom we presume by this time is Mr. Edward Moxon."

Among these are some sonnets to Lamb himself, written at his grave. One, in spite of some rather forced expressions, has genuine feeling.

SONNET XIV.

I meet him still at his accustom'd hour,
Duly each morn as he ascends the hill,
Where the high cross of Tottenham doth fulfil
Its purpose with admonitory power:
Or wandering by the side of pastoral Lea,
Who murmurs in his ear of happier days,
When Walton on his bank sang *Marlow's* lays,
Blending with these his cheerful piety.

Long may his spirit greet me on the road,
And oft revive within my lonely breast
The sweet remembrance of his lov'd abode,
And sweeter smile that gave my worn feet rest,
And e'en a parent's care on me bestow'd,
Light'ning each burden that my breast opprest.

Mr. Le Grice—the "C. V. L." of Elia, Charles Valentine Le Grice—died only yesterday, it may be said—in 1859—and was perhaps the last link between Lamb's childhood and our time. He recollected the visits of Doctor Johnson to the school, and the deep awe and reverence with which the tremendous moralist was regarded among the boys. Also the still greater flutter of sensation which ran round the benches, when a boy brought in news that the Doctor was dead. He had been a tutor in a family called Nicholl, and had married the mother of his pupil. He was an amiable "unpractising" clergyman, a sort of Yorick as regards jests; and it must not be forgotten that to him is due the "kindly engendure" of that capital quip, the grace after meat, which has so often been ascribed to Theo-

dore Hook and smaller humorists.—"No clergyman present? Give thanks." For sixty years he was a contributor to the honest plodding pages of the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' in which lies enshrined so much pleasant old-fashioned reading. He had a turn for sonnets of not very excellent quality, but still carefully turned and polished, and was the author of a little Poem of Society, called 'The Art of Poking the Fire.' When he heard of the tragical scene told by Lloyd, of his meeting Charles and Mary Lamb going across the fields on their way to the Asylum, he wrote the following lines:—

An angel's wing is waving o'er their heads,
While they, the brother and sister walk;
Nor dare, as heedless of its fanning, talk
Of woes which are not buried with the dead.

Hand clasped in hand they move: adown their cheeks
From the full heart-spring, tears o'erflowing gush;
Close and more close they clasp, as if to speak
Would wake the sorrows which they seek to hush.

Down to the mansion slow their footsteps tend,
Where blank despair is soothed by mercy's spell;
Pausing in momentary pray'r to bend,
Ere the cheered sister passes to her cell.
Soon in the hope that yet there will be given
Calm and sweet hours—foretastes of heaven.
Hereife, Cornwall, 1849.

Charles Lloyd, with whom Lamb came into his first battle in 1796, outlived him for some five years. He seems to have had an elegant mind, exquisitely cultivated; but, curious to say, overcast with the same morbid shadow that lay on his friends. He was known to divert this by such occupations as digging in his garden, listening to music, or even knitting. He had translated 'Alfieri,' had written poems of greater length and ambition than that which he had furnished to the little joint-stock venture of 1796, and even novels.* He seems to have been as "gentle-hearted" as his friend;

* Talfourd, confounding him with another Charles Lloyd, states that he graduated at Cambridge in 1799. But he never took a degree.

was noted for pleasant powers of analysis as applied to manners, and the delicate *nuances* of social life.

Lloyd was fond of forming sudden and violent friendships. Thus, when Southey was staying down "in an humble way" at Burton, in Hampshire, he came down to see him, though quite a stranger, and brought Lamb with him. His "arrangement" with Coleridge, at Stowey, was of an odd sort: the wealthy banker's son appearing to support the expenses of the establishment, in return for the great thinker's intercourse and conversation. But the great thinker had to contribute more. Fits and paroxysms used to come on the young poet—three sometimes within the week—and Coleridge had to be called up of nights to watch his friend. Dreadful scenes appear to have taken place in that little household. It does, indeed, seem strange that all this "set" should have had such an amount of mental disorder, now taking the shape of confirmed insanity, now of some morbid eccentricity; and, as it were, passing from one to the other.

Cotamy is good reading. Mary
is always thankful for Books on
her way. I wont trouble you for any
yet, having enough to read.
in my way. Young Hazlitt lives, at
least his Father does, at 3 or 36
[36 I have it down, with the 6 scratched
out] Boswell Street, Fleet Street If
not to be found, his mother's address
is, Mrs Hazlitt, Mrs Tomlinsons,
Potters Bar. At one or other he
must be heard of. We shall expect you
with the full moon. Meantime, our
thanks

C L

we go on very quietly &c —

When this *ménage* was broken up, and Coleridge had gone abroad, Lamb went down to Birmingham, where he stayed a fortnight with Lloyd—a visit not noticed by his biographer—and where he was remarked to have been full of spirits and happiness. Lloyd finally found his way to a pleasant settlement on the picturesque Brathay, near Ambleside, where he became "a little Rousseauish," and where the boy Hartley Coleridge used to play with a younger Charles Lloyd. In Hartley's recollection was a pleasant picture of Lloyd's reading out Pope "in the little dining-room;" and he could recall, long after, the very shape and binding of the book. His mind, however, finally gave way, and he died in the year 1839, at Versailles, where he had long been settled. The following is his little tribute to his friend; for the list of those who wrote verses to Lamb is a long one, and worth preserving:—

> The child of impulse ever to appear,
> And yet through duty's path strictly to steer—
> O Lamb, thou art a mystery to me!
> Thou art so prudent and so mad with wildness.

K.

Thou art a source of everlasting glee,
Yet desolation of the very childless
Has been thy lot! Never in one like thee
Did I see worth, majestic from its wildness;
So far in thee from being an annoyance,
E'en to the vicious 'tis a source of joyance.

LLOYD.

Of all his friends, he most relished the odd nature of George Dyer. In the 'Life' this character stands out with a wonderful freshness and relief: his peculiar turn of mind was a perpetual feast to Lamb, and would have delighted Mr. Shandy himself. That arbitrarily naming of poets in couples, like "Gray and Mason," "Lloyd and Lamb," his dim recollections of the poet "anterior to Barbour," who had written some fine things, but whose name, nor whose fine things, he could not recall, with other vagaries of his "Pericranicks," are truly Shandyan. He was an inexhaustible fund of delight for Lamb, who was always writing—but affectionately—some new comic oddity to his own friends. An extract from one of his prefaces is so singular in

tone, and so mysteriously solemn, that it quite falls in with Lamb's view of him:—

"In addition to what has been said in the Introduction, I think it prudent to give the following intimation, as circumstances compel me to follow an arrangement different from what was announced in a former volume. Several poems are kept back which were intended to *characterize* these volumes. . . . . To some of these I looked to constitute the strength of my Poems. . . . The character of the Poems will be vindicated in the following Essay; from which it will appear that, had I completed my design, the present work would have exceeded in research any in which I have yet engaged.

"I say then, to such as encouraged the former volume, that they are under no obligation to proceed further. The volume is complete, and no set will be broken. Should a balance be due from me, any person applying to my Bookseller, may receive the second edition of the 'Poet's Fate.' . . . These will settle the difference."

He then says, in "conclusion, he *may* probably have

recourse to poetry *occasionally* as an amusement. How some of his poems that have not yet appeared may be disposed of, will depend on the advice of one or two judicious friends. They have been suppressed for the present from *motives of the greatest delicacy.*"

The heading with which one of his little poems is introduced is very singular also: "A NIGHT THOUGHT, WRITTEN IN A TIME OF AFFLICTION, and a severe domestic affliction, to which there is not the most distant allusion in this poem: it is sufficient to say that it originated in measures which the author was bound to adopt on leaving college, a painful recollection of which, *in addition to recent afflictions*, gave birth to these elegiac lines."

This pretty sonnet—addressed to Lamb the Quaker's friend—of the Quaker poet, Bernard Barton, will be read with pleasure:

Delightful author! unto whom I owe
Moments and moods of fancy, and of feeling
Afresh to grateful memory now appealing,
Fain would I "bless thee—ere I let thee go!"

From month to month has the exhaustless flow
Of thy original mind, its wealth revealing
With quaintest humour, and deep pathos healing
The world's rude wounds, revived life's early glow:
And mixed with this, at times, to earnest thought
Glimpses of truth most simple and sublime,
By thy imagination have been wrought
Over my spirit. From the olden time
Of authorship thy Patent should be dated,
And thou with Marvell, Browne, and Burton mated.

B. Barton.

Bernard Barton's rhymes are very sweet, and "Quakerly," with a sober *brown* air over them, and a tranquil complacency. He wrote thus once more to his friend:—

To Charles Lamb.

Friend Lamb, thy choice was good, to love the lore
Of our old bygone bards, whose racy page
Rich mellowing Time makes sweeter than before.
The blossom left—for the long-garnered store
Of fruitage, now right luscious in its age,
Although to fashion's taste austere: what more
Can be expected from the popular rage
For tinsel gauds that are to gold preferred?
Me it much grieves, as I did erst presage.

Vain fashion's foils had every heart deterred
From the warm homely phrase of other days,
Until thy Woodvil's ancient voice I heard;
And now right fain, yet fearing, honest bard,
I pause to greet thee with so poor a praise.

Thomas Moore met Lamb two or three times at breakfast and dinner; and it is amusing to see the "not bad!" air of patronage and doubtful approbation with which the poet received his efforts. He plainly considered him a jester, a little above Hood or Hook. He introduced him at a Mr. Monkhouse's, an Amphytrion, who was glad to furnish good dinners and perfect silence for the pleasure of having such men at his table. Wordsworth used to stop with him, and Moore came to dine with Wordsworth, without knowing this Mr. Monkhouse. It was a prodigious party, for there were Rogers, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Charles Lamb and his sister. "A clever fellow, certainly," says Mr. Moore, "but full of villanous and abortive puns, which he miscarries of every minute." He told of his saying, on a young barrister getting his first brief, "Thou first great cause

least understood." He praised Defoe's 'Colonel Jack' warmly, and told Moore that he got £170 for two years' 'London Magazine' contributions. "I thought more," writes Moore; and certainly it seems slender payment.

It is curious to read the different impressions upon Lamb. He was accustomed enough to meet men of wit and genius, yet this gathering of poets almost awed him. Coleridge declaimed magnificently, absorbing all the talk. Lamb, who would seem almost to have "travelled over his mind" from long intimacy, was as delighted as if it was the first time he heard him. Moore seems to have made little impression on Lamb in the presence of such a giant, and this may account for Elia's being described by Moore as only "a clever fellow, certainly."

It is not too much to say that some of the happiest and most characteristic "things" of Lamb's are not to be found in the 'Life.' Nothing could be more excellent than the comment which Moore heard him give on the mediocre observation of a mediocre

person, delivered, too, in his stammering, hesitating way: "Johnson said worse things than *that*"—then after a little pause—"and better." The same poet, too, heard a capital practical comment on that passage in Lamb's 'Detached Thoughts on Books,' and his repugnance to the "books that no gentleman's library should be without," in which odious class were included 'Hume,' 'Gibbon,' 'Robertson,' &c. He gravely told Moore—who was immensely delighted with the oddity of the notion—his plan of getting rid of these solemn historical worthies, and of replacing them with all the heroes of the 'Dunciad.' This was a real bit of Elia, translated into hard practical life, made to take the shape of material things—humour in the very concrete—and all, too, without losing the bloom.

Moore, in his light way, has a dreadful hint about Lamb's great domestic trouble. He seems to speak confidently, as if there was no doubt in the matter. He had seen Mary Lamb—dismissing her carelessly as "the *poor woman who went mad with him in the dili-*

gence on the way to Paris." This flippant allusion does indeed stand for a dreadful incident in this terrible domestic trouble of Lamb's. Going up to Paris, she was seized at Amiens by her old malady. He did not know what to do. Fortunately, he lighted on some acquaintances, by whom she was taken care of. Lamb himself went on to Versailles, where he found the Kenneys, and other friends, who seemed to resent his being more "reserved and shut up" than usual, and not so cordial or amiable as his wont. It was scarcely surprising with such a skeleton in his closet down at Amiens.

Leslie, "gentle-hearted" himself, knew and understood Charles Lamb. That fresh, clear-toned painter, whose brain could follow so well the humour of Sterne and Molière, was privileged to hear one of his best jokes; one, too, that has been floating about without a distinct authority attached. It was a dinner at Gillman's, at which Leslie was present; and the stage-coach was coming home filled with guests, when an outside passenger put the question, "All full inside?" We can

conceive the merriment within when Lamb replied, "Well! that last bit of Gillman's pudding did the business *for me.*" Leslie, too, had remarked that unfortunate but most natural wish of Lamb's to keep clear of being thought sentimental, and his injuring himself with the "sober people" by thoughtless speeches. It was to Leslie that Coleridge spoke so warmly of his friend, in words which showed that, after so many years, their friendship was as warm as at the beginning:—

"Lamb's character is a sacred one with me. No associations that he may form can hurt the purity of his mind; but it is not therefore necessary that I should see all men with his eyes." And elsewhere Coleridge wrote with equal truth and sincerity: "Nothing ever left a stain on that gentle creature's mind, which looked upon the degraded men and things around him like moonshine on a dunghill, which shines and takes no pollution. All things are shadows to him, except those which move his affections."

Lamb was very indignant when he heard of Sir

George Beaumont's—the dilettante painter and patron—legacy to his friend's wife. He said, openly, it was a stigma. "If he thought Coleridge a scamp," he asked warmly, "why did he go on asking him to dinner?"

Mr. Patmore—whose curiously diffuse reminiscences and surprising "Boswellizing" of Plumer Ward is one of the mysteries of biography—has recorded some recollections of a night with Lamb:—

"*December* 5, 1826.—Spent the evening at Lamb's. When I went in, they (Charles and his sister) were alone, playing at cards together.

"I took up a book on the table—'Almack's'—and Lamb said: 'Ay; that must be *all max* to the lovers of scandal.'

"Speaking of Northcote, he related a story of him, illustrating his love for doing and saying little malicious things. It was at a party at Sir Joshua Reynolds's, where Boswell was present, and they were talking of Malone, and somebody said that Malone seemed to live

in Shakspeare, and not to have a feeling or thought connected with anything else: upon which Northcote said—'Then he must have been the meanest of mankind. The man who sets up any other man as a sort of God, and worships him to the exclusion of all other things and thoughts, must be *the meanest of men*;—and everybody,' said Northcote (who was himself the original relater of the story)—'everybody turned and looked at Boswell.'

"We spoke of L. E. L., and Lamb said—'If she belonged to me, I would lock her up and feed her on bread and water till she left off writing poetry. A female poet, or female author of any kind, ranks below an actress, I think.'

"—— was mentioned, and Lamb said he seemed to him to be a sort of L. E. L. in pantaloons.

"Bernard Barton was mentioned, and Lamb said that he did not write nonsense, at any rate—which all the rest of them did (meaning the magazine poets of the day). He was dull enough; but not nonsensical.

'He writes English, too,' said Lamb, 'which they do not.'

"H. C. R. came in about half-past eight, and put a stop to all further conversation—keeping all the talk to himself.

"Speaking of some German story, in which a man is made to meet *himself*—he himself having changed forms with some one else—the talk turned on what we should think of ourselves, if we could see ourselves without knowing that it *was* ourselves. R. said that he had all his life felt a sort of horror come over him every time he caught a sight of his own face in the glass; and that he was almost afraid to shave himself for the same reason. He said that he often wondered how anybody could sustain an intimacy with, much less feel a friendship for, a man with such a face. Lamb said—'I hope you have mercy on the barbers, and always shave yourself.'

"Speaking of names, Lamb said—'John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster,' was the grandest name in

the world. On this R. spoke of a Spanish pamphlet he had lately met with, describing the Reformation, in which all the English names were changed to Spanish ones, and the fine effect it had. It began by relating that a great prince named *Don Henriquez* (Henry VIII.) was married to a beautiful princess called *La Donna Catalina* (Queen Catherine)—that he was under the influence of a wily priest named *il Cardinal Bolséo* (Wolsey), who advised him to divorce his chaste wife la Donna Catalina, and unite himself to a foul though beautiful witch named *La Donna Anna Volena* (Anna Boleyn). Jane Seymour was called *La Donna Joanna Sumaro*, and her house (at Greenwich) the castle of *Grenuccio*.

"*Friday*, July 13.—Spent the evening at Leigh Hunt's, with the Lambs, Atherstone, Mrs. Shelley, and the Gliddons. Lamb talked admirably about Dryden and some of the older poets, in particular of Davenant's *Gondibert*. Of this Hunt wanted to show that it consisted almost entirely of monosyllables, which gave a

most heavy and monotonous effect to the versification; and he read some passages to that effect. Lamb would not admit this, and he read an admirable passage in reply, about a Museum of Natural Curiosities in which Man, the pretended Lord of all other creatures, hung by the wall, dry, like all the rest, and even Woman, the Lord of Man, hung there too—'and *she* dried by him.' The effect of the passage was prodigious. . . .

"He (Lamb) spoke of Dryden as a prodigious person, so far as his wonderful power of versification went, but not a first-rate poet, or even capable of appreciating such—giving instances from his prefaces in proof of this. He spoke of Dryden's prefaces as the finest pieces of *criticism*, nevertheless, that had ever been written, and the better for being contradictory to each other, because not founded on any pretended *rules*.

"Hunt was asking how it was necessary to manage in order to get Coleridge to come and dine. Lamb replied that he believed he (Coleridge) was under a kind of watch and ward—alluding to the watchful

care taken of him by the Gillmans, with whom he was then residing. 'Ah,' said H., '*vain* is the watch (Mrs. G.), and *bootless* is the ward' (Mr. G.), who always wore shoes."

Charles Lamb to P. G. Patmore.

"DEAR P.—I am so poorly! I have been to a funeral, where I made a pun, to the consternation of the rest of the mourners. And we had wine. I can't describe to you the howl which the widow set up at proper intervals. Dash could, for it was not unlike what he makes.

"The letter I sent you was one directed to the care of E. White, India House, for Mrs. Hazlitt. *Which* Mrs. Hazlitt I don't yet know, but A. has taken it to France on speculation. Really it is embarrassing. There is Mrs. present H., Mrs. late H., and Mrs. John H., and to which of the three Mrs. Wigginses it appertains I don't know. I wanted to open it, but it's transportation.

"I am sorry you are plagued about your book. I would strongly recommend you to take for one story Massinger's 'Old Law.' It is exquisite. I can think of no other.

"Dash is frightful this morning. He whines and stands up on his hind legs. He misses Becky, who is gone to town. I took him to Barnet the other day, and he couldn't eat his victuals after it. Pray God his intellects be not slipping.

"Mary is gone out for some soles. I suppose it's no use to ask you to come and partake of 'em; else there's a steam-vessel.

"I am doing a tragi-comedy in two acts, and have got on tolerably; but it will be refused, or worse. I never had luck with anything my name was put to.

"Oh, I am so poorly! I *waked* it at my cousin's the bookbinder's, who is now with God; or if he is not, it's no fault of mine.

"We hope the Frank wines do not disagree with Mrs. Patmore. By the way, I like her.

"Did you ever taste frogs? Get them, if you can. They are like little Lilliput rabbits, only a thought nicer.

"Christ, how sick I am!—not of the world, but of the widow's shrub. She's sworn under £6000, but I think she perjured herself. She howls in E *lá*, and I comfort her in B flát. You understand music?

"If you haven't got Massinger, you have nothing to do but go to the first bibliothèque you can light upon at Boulogne, and ask for it (Gifford's edition), and if they haven't got it, you can have 'Athalie,' par Monsieur Racine, and make the best of it. But that 'Old Law' 's delicious.*

* Mr. Patmore sent him a gathering of tales he was about publishing, and Lamb's 'marginalia' are highly characteristic:—

"Besides the words 'riant' and 'Euphrosyne,' the sentence is senseless. 'A sweet sadness' capable of inspiring 'a more *grave joy* —than what?—than demonstrations of *mirth*? Odd if it had no been. I had once a *wry aunt*, which may make me dislike th phrase.

"'Pleasurable:'—no word is good that is awkward to spell. (Query, Welcome or Joyous?)

"'No shrimps!' (That's in answer to Mary's question about how the soles are to be done.)

"I am uncertain where this *wandering* letter may

"'*Steady self-possession* rather than *undaunted courage*,' &c. The two things are not opposed enough. You mean, rather than rash fire of valour in action."

"'Looking like a heifer,' I fear won't do in prose. (Qy.) 'Like to some spotless heifer,'—or, 'that you might have compared her to some spotless heifer,' &c.—or, 'Like to some sacrificial heifer of old.' I should prefer 'garlanded with flowers as for a sacrifice'—and cut the cow altogether."

"(Say) 'Like the muttering of some strange spell,'—omitting the demon,—they are *subject* to spells, they don't use them."

"'*Feud*' here (and before and after) is wrong. (Say) old malice, or, difference. *Feud* is of clans. It might be applied to family quarrels, but is quite improper to individual fallings out."

"'Apathetic." Vile word.

"'Mechanically,' faugh! — insensibly — involuntarily — in-anything-ly but mechanically."

"Calianax's character should be somewhere briefly *drawn*, not *left* to be dramatically inferred."

"'Surprised and almost vexed while it troubled her.' (awkward.) Better, 'in a way that while it deeply troubled her, could not but surprise and vex her to think it should be a source of trouble at all."

"'Reaction' is vile slang. 'Physical'—vile word.'"

"Decidedly, Dorigen should simply propose to him to remove the rocks as *ugly* or *dangerous*, not as affecting her with fears for

reach you. What you mean by Poste Restante, God knows. Do you mean I must pay the postage? So I do, to Dover.

"We had a merry passage with the widow at the Commons. She was howling—part howling and part giving directions to the proctor—when crash! down went my sister through a crazy chair, and made the clerks grin, and I grinned, and the widow tittered—*and then I knew that she was not inconsolable.* Mary was more frightened than hurt.

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her husband. The idea of her husband should be excluded from a promise which is meant to be *frank* upon impossible conditions. She cannot promise in one breath infidelity to him, and make the conditions a good to him. Her reason for hating the rocks is good, but not to be expressed here."

"Insert after 'to whatever consequences it might lead,'—'Neither had Arviragus been disposed to interpose a husband's authority to prevent the execution of this rash vow, was he unmindful of that older and more solemn vow which, in the young days of their marriage, he had imposed upon himself, in no instance to control the settled purpose or determination of his wedded wife;—so that by the chains of a double contract he seemed bound to abide by her decision in this instance, whatever it might be.'"

"She'd make a good match for anybody (by she, I mean the widow).

"'If he bring but a *relict* away
He is happy, nor heard to complain.'

SHENSTONE.

"Procter has got a wen growing out at the nape of his neck, which his wife wants him to have cut off; but I think it rather an agreeable excrescence—like his poetry—redundant. Hone has hanged himself for debt. Godwin was taken up for picking pockets. Becky takes to bad courses. Her father was blown up in a steam machine. The coroner found it Insanity. I should not like him to sit on my letter.*

"Do you observe my direction? Is it Gallic?—Classical?

"Do try and get some frogs. You must ask for 'grenouilles' (green-eels). They don't understand 'frogs,' though it's a common phrase with us.

"If you go through Bulloign (Boulogne), inquire if

* The reader need scarcely be told that all the above items of home news are pure fiction.

old Godfrey is living, and how he got home from the Crusades. He must be a very old man now.

"If there is anything new in politics or literature in France, keep it till I see you again, for I'm in no hurry. Chatty-Briant (Chateaubriand) is well, I hope.

"I think I have no more news; only give both our loves ('all three,' says Dash) to Mrs. Patmore, and bid her get quite well, as I am at present, bating qualms, and the grief incident to losing a valuable relation.

"C. L."

"*Londres, July* 19, 1827."

Lamb was fond of being comically minute in his directions of his locality. Here is an instance:—

My dear Haydon,

I will come with pleasure to 22, Lisson Grove North, at Rosse's, half-way up, right-hand side, if I can find it.

Yours,

C. Lamb.

20, Russell Court,
Covent Garden East.
Half way up, next the corner,
Left-hand side.

When he found himself with Haydon—that luckless painter of "broad canvases" — some one said they were like a pair of boys. The boisterous scene told in Haydon's diary, and told with such animation, of the simple comptroller of stamps, who had corresponded with Wordsworth, and who unluckily met him when Lamb was present, is admirable. The comptroller asked the poet the wonderful question, "Don't you think, sir, Milton was a great genius?" when Lamb rose, and taking up a candle, said, politely, "Sir, will you allow me to look at your phrenological development?" Then, at every remark of the poor comptroller, he chanted—

> Diddle diddle dumpling, my son John
> Went to bed with his breeches on.

Quite in the same way is his humorous treatment of the poet whose friend had submitted some newly-published verses to his inspection. He was to meet the gentleman at dinner, and the poems were shown to

Lamb a little before the author's arrival. When he came, he proved to be empty and conceited. During dinner, Lamb fell into the delightful drollery of saying, now and again, "That reminds me of some verses I wrote when I was very young," and then quoted a line or two, which he recollected, from the gentleman's book, to the latter's amazement and indignation. Lamb, immensely diverted, capped it all by introducing the first lines of 'Paradise Lost,' "Of man's first disobedience," as also written by himself, which actually brought the gentleman on his feet, bursting with rage. He said he had sat by and allowed his own "little verses" to be taken without protest, but he could not endure to see Milton pillaged. This seems to be one of the best stories about Lamb, and the situation one in which he would have revelled.

A lady once bored him a good deal—"Such a charming man! I know him! Bless him! I know him!" To her, Charles, wearied with repetition of this encomium—"Well, I don't—but *d——n him at a hazard.*"

The "dipping" story, as illustrative of Lamb's stammer, is well-known, and has gone round the jest-books.. "I am to be d-d-dipped," he said to the bathing men "All right, sir," and he was plunged forthwith. He came up gasping "I am to be di-di-ppe-d," and he went down again. The third time he got it out—"only once." To some one, talking of matter-of-fact men, he announced gravely, "now *I am a matter-of-lie man.*" So, too, his taking his pipe out of his mouth, to ask a disputant, "did he *really* mean to contend that a thief was not a good man?" So, too, his calling Voltaire a very good Messiah—*for the French.* So, too, his judgment on clever women. Mrs. Inchbald he pronounced the "only endurable clever woman he ever knew." A domestic talk with Miss Lamb, on his asking a friend up in the evening: "Charles, who is Mr. Pitman?" "A clerk in the India House." "Then why ask him and give up the others—older friends?" "Pitman," said Charles, "was always civil. When the smoking-club at Don Saltero's was broken up, he offered

me all the ornaments and apparatus, which I declined, and therefore I asked him here to-night. I never could bear to give pain. Have I not been called the gentle-hearted Charles when I was young, and shall I now derogate?"

We can almost hear him gravely arguing this point. That was indeed a good natured action—his sitting to a friend "for a whole series of the British Admirals"! They were wanted as illustrations for some periodical, and he was willing to be useful as a lay figure.

He delighted in children, and in telling them strange, wild stories. No doubt he liked to see their trusting, wondering, little faces as he told them. A young girl, daughter of a late well-known dramatist, was often taken out by him on a day's junketing; and she has told how they never passed a Punch's show, but always stopped and sat on the steps, and saw them all out in succession. But there were, unhappily, other things which he could not pass by either; and she was left

outside many a gin-palace while he went in. Of this sad weakness there can be no question. It is best in such cases not to resort to well-meaning and weak palliation, but to own the truth honestly. Once too—I have heard on the same authority—he saw a group of hungry little faces wistfully looking into the window of a pastry-cook's shop; he went in and came out, and distributed cakes all round. This recalls his friend's banquet to the young chimney-sweeps. His pleasant paper, too, on the same subject, was not a mere bit of grotesque sympathy; for when some one was publishing a little volume of verses in their behalf, he copied out some pretty lines of Blake's, the artist, and sent them.

Allusion has been made to his friendship with Haydon. When the luckless comptroller had his head so comically examined by Lamb, that inspection took place in presence of the painter's great picture of "Jerusalem." Lamb celebrated that work in another way, sending some Latin lines to 'The Champion':—

In tabulam eximii pictoris R. B. Haydoni in qua Solymeei adveniente domino Palmas in via prosternentes mira arte depinguntur.

Quid vult iste equitatus? et quid velit iste virorum
Palmifera ingens turba et vox tremebunda Hosanna?
Hosannâ Christo semper, semperque canamus.
Palma fuit senior Pictor celeberrimus olim;
Sed palmam cedat, modo si foret ille superstes
Palma Haydone tibi: tu palmas omnibus aufers.
Palma negata macrum, donataque reddit opimum
Si simul incipiat cum fama increscere corpus
Tu cito pinguesces, fies et amicule, obesus.
Affectant lauros pictores atque poetæ,
Sin laurum invideant (sed quis tibi) laurigerentes
Pro lauro palma viridanti tempora ligas.*

CAROLAGNULUS.

TRANSLATION OF THE ABOVE.

What rider's that? and who those myriads bringing
Him on his way, with palms, Hosanna singing?
Hosanna to the Christ—Heaven, earth should still be ringing?

In days of old, Old Palma won renown,
But Palma's self must yield the painter's crown,
Haydon, to thee. Thy palms put every other down.

* If this be compared with the version given in 'Haydon's Life,' many variations will be found.

If Flaccus' sentence with the truth agree,
That palms awarded make men plump to be,
Friend Horace, Haydon soon shall match in bulk with thee.

Painters with poets for the laurel vie;
But should the laureate band thy claims deny,
Wear thou thine own green palm, Haydon, triumphantly.

C. L.

His puns must, we may fancy, have been the least agreeable phase of his wit. "I'll Lamb-pun him," however, is truly characteristic; besides, we should hear the voice, the struggle for utterance, and see the face, and the bright eye and smile. Good, too, were the puns after Swift's manner—deriving the name of the Man-t-chou Tartars from their cannibal habits; and that of the Chinese-Celtes from sell-teas.

"Believe me, the best acid," he said to a friend, "is assiduity." To him, too, belongs the origin of the capital joke against the Scotch, of their having a special corner in the future place of punishment—"fire *without brimstone*;" though Lamb pleasantly owns that

Coleridge had helped to work it into more piquant shape.

In London, too, which he so loved, his eye always fell with special pleasure on Somerset House, and he used to stop and look long at "the new church at Chelsea," which, with the "bell-house," had for him a sort of likeness to Trinity College, Cambridge. His was a mind that could find out the cheap but inexhaustible entertainment there is in the out-door and familiar objects that are about us, and he often fondly admired the houses at the Bond Street end of George Street, which his friend Manning had said were of the warm tone of the bricks in the great Chinese wall.

There was indeed a quaintness in his every-day tastes quite Shandyan. He loved the old stones of London, and its older landmarks, and grieved to see them pass away. The old clock was taken down from St. Dunstan's Church, and its loss drew tears from his eyes. When Exeter Change was swept away—Leigh Hunt recollected the wild beasts roaring there—he never could

pass the place without a pang. He said he "missed the combs dangling in the air." He loved the little corners of London; the old-fashioned nooks. He studied the great city like a book; and no doubt had discovered, like Leigh Hunt, his friend, that there is not a single street in it, from which you cannot see a tree.

Once, too, his sister lost him in the great city, and sent some one to search for him. He was found near Crown Office Row, having strayed away to the old house where he had been born and had been a child.

His humour seems at times almost too fine for his company; and some of his comically extravagant declarations at times were accepted gravely by those who should have known him better. On mere strangers and acquaintances whom he did not care to set right as to his true opinions, social puritans and pedants whom, perhaps, he delighted in "shocking a little," it was natural that unfavourable impressions should be left. Thus, in a circle where his biographer was

present, and where the infamous witnesses on the Queen's Trial were being discussed, Lamb said gravely that "'he should like to know them—*to ask them to supper.*" "*You would not sit with them?*" asked Talfourd, solemnly—a question that brought out the smart answer; "Yes, I would sit with anything *but a hen or a tailor.*" This may seem a trifling illustration, but even such a momentary misconception can only stand for more serious ones. His wish to have the Italian witnesses at supper was quite of a piece with his grave question to the disputant—Lamb, taking his pipe out of his mouth to put it—"Now did he *really* mean to contend that a thief was not a good man?" So, too, his protesting that he should like to have known Judas and Doctor Faustus, or Guy Fawkes.

At Enfield, in "the bald-looking, yellowish house," as Hood described it (not so good as Lamb's—"gamboge-coloured house"), he tolerated a wasp's nest at his very door. One of these stung Hood's pony, which amused him; but later, when rallying Mrs. Hood on his dread of

wasps, one of them crept up the table and stung him in the thumb. He gave a cry of agony, but the next moment came the jest. It was, he said, "a stinging comment on 'Macbeth:' 'By the pricking of my thumbs,' etc." It was in one of these walks with Hood when he poured out scraps of old poetry, quaint morals from old books, and curious out-of-the-way stories, that Dash, Hood's dog, and afterwards his, set off to chase some sheep. The indignant owner came out to expostulate, when Elia said in his quiet way, "Hunt *Lambs*, sir? Why, he never hunted *me*." But at this little retreat he tried in vain to have solitude: and wrote comically of this futile attempt to Mrs. Shelley. "The six days are our Sabbath: the seventh—why Cockneys will come for a little fresh air, and so——" One of the most charming instances of his good-nature was agreeing to take charge of a school at the request of a young schoolmaster, "during the absence of the principal;" and he did so, but gave the boys a holiday. The garden of Eden, he was fond of saying,

must have been a dull place. He loved the high road and the inn; and, it is said, used to test the friendship of "fine" friends, by proposing to them their choice of a glass at the "Rose and Crown," or the "Horse Shoe." So did he treat Wordsworth, and the fastidious Miss Kelly, the actress, who without hesitation entered the tavern with him. Hampton Court, with its warm red, he said openly, he preferred to Versailles. The days at Twickenham he called above all others his "Red Letter days." His favourite *country* walks, by the high road, were at Waltham and Winchmore, or perhaps by the Lea, thinking of Walton. He liked Cheshunt and Southgate, and Ware, and Tottenham High Cross. He had not learned to be a practical or a business man. He never could tie up a parcel or pack a trunk. Yet he was a punctual person. He could not endure to owe money; the mere promise of a payment chafed him. Thus he wished to leave a friend a small sum; but the sense of this even fancied obligation weighed on him, and he gave it to him beforehand, "to have done with the

thing," he said. So this was interpreted by Mr. Moxon. But we may go deeper, and see in this simulated impatience, and this fiction of an intended bequest, a wish to force his bounty on a friend and overbear reluctance. He never kept a letter; except a couple or so: and heartily despised "relics," especially of the sentimental sort. Thus, when a traveller brought him acorns, from Virgil's tomb, he amused himself with throwing them at the hackney coachmen that passed by. Scarcely one of his books have portraits; in which he differed from his friend Hunt, who loved cheerful pictures in his reading.

In 1823 Lamb had moved to Colebrooke Row, Islington, "left hand from Sadler's Wells," a "detached whitish house, with six good rooms, with the New River, rather elderly by this time, running in front," (if a moderate walking pace can be so termed), and a spacious garden behind, "with vines (I assure you), pears, strawberries, leeks, etc." "You enter without passages into a cheerful dining-room, all studded over and rough with old books, and above is a lightsome drawing-room,

with three windows, full of choice prints." A tempting description. This Colebrooke Row was remarkable also as the residence of the eccentric Reverend Mr. Rule, who had his academy for young gentlemen here, and whose odd advertisements in the papers used to excite attention. Dramatic performances of the "young gentlemen" were the general feature of his plan of education, and the "exhibitions" in public of Mr. Rule's pupils came more frequently than was consistent with the basis of a sound general education. This house had been previously occupied by Woodfall, the "Junius" publisher. Who has succeeded to Rule and Woodfall I know not, but the subsequent tenant of Lamb's cottage—more house certainly than cottage—was a well-known soda-water manufacturer. No one would have been so merry on the quality and calling of his successor as Lamb himself, or would have written of him with such *goût* to his friends. Of some of these Islington nights, when Lamb talked with delight over his books, as over his old friends, little sketches have

been preserved. One is characteristic enough, and again shows so clearly that in his speech as in his writings we have always the same unaffected Charles Lamb before us.* On this night there was only one visitor and Charles Lamb and his sister present.

He was in high spirits at first about his living friends. Coleridge's "vast reading"—Wordsworth—and Southey whose hair he said, triumphantly, was *perfectly grey*, while his own remained black—and dwelt fondly on Keats and Procter. Then he rambled away to those older —perhaps more loved—friends who were on the shelves. They were a long time in fond raptures over 'Chapman's Homer;' and Lamb was delighted to learn from his antiquarian visitor that there were more translations than one of this rich old writer. (Lamb in one of his letters calls Chapman "divine.") The visitor offered to lend him one of these. "No, no," he said, "I know you won't like the *gap* it will leave in your library." (The

* See the review of Talfourd's 'Life' by the odd writer in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1838—Mr. Upcott, perhaps.

reader will think of the lost eye-tooth which the purloined volume of St. Bonaventura suggested.) He relished the "delicate" little verses of Ambrose Philips. Thence strayed away to Milton's 'Samson,' both quoting favourite passages; but Miss Lamb's memory left them both far behind. They did not forget Fuller—"the dear, foolish, old angel"—Burton, Sir T. Browne, and Feltham; he spoke with fondness of his "little duodecimo volumes" of Evelyn; which he was fond of "picking up" on Barbican stalls; and with the delight of an epicure spoke of that writer's 'Sallets.' He was asked how he knew his books one from the other, for hardly any were lettered: his answer was as characteristic as it was true: "How does a shepherd know his sheep?" All through the night he sprinkled his puns over the table—being specially hard upon albums; and after a delightful night—and those who have such tastes will understand how seducing is this communion of the living and the dead, this little act of reverence to the great ones departed, taking them down to share in the converse of

the living—he saw his friend out to the door, and left him on his road, with a caution against the New River into which Dyer had so absently walked.

There were evenings, too—epicurean in their way—when his friend, Novello, sitting at the organ, kept rolling out one "solemn anthem" after another, converting his drawing-room into a chapel—(all readers know the tuneful passage at the end of his 'Chapter upon Ears')—until the entrance of the "friendly supper-tray" brought him down from heaven to the sober "substantials" of life. "Friend *Nov*"—the Tom Pinch of Elia—furnishes yet another picture, more graphic still, in a letter. The frequenting of the Wesleyan chapel in Kingsland has an air of Lamb's grave circumstantial inventions, for in such jests he usually chose some almost unimportant details; and it is an indication—trifling, perhaps—of the degree to which Lamb's Essays are his Letters, and his Letters his Essays, that in the picture of "*Nov*" in the Essay, there is also an allusion to Dr. Watts.

"They have a large *cheap* house and garden," he wrote to Leigh Hunt, "with *a dainty library* (magnificent!) *without books.* But what will make you bless yourself (I am too old for wonder), something has touched the right organ in Vincentio at last. *He attends a Wesleyan Chapel on Kingsland Green.* He at first tried to laugh it off—he only went for the singing; but the cloven foot—I retract—the Lamb's trotters are at length apparent. Mary Isabella attributes it to a lightness, induced by his headaches. *But I think* I see in it a less accidental influence.

"Mr. Clark is at perfect staggers! The whole fabric of his infidelity is shaken. He has no one to join him in his coarse insults and indecent obstreperousness against Christianity, for Holmes (the bonny Holmes) is gone to Salisbury, to be organist, and Isabella and the Clark make but a feeble quorum. The children have all nice, neat little clasped pray-books, and I have laid out 7*s.* 8*d.* in Watts's Hymns, for Christmas presents for them. Her eldest girl alone holds out; she has been

at Boulogne, skirting upon the past focus of Atheism. . . . But the strongholds are crumbling. N. appears as yet to have but a confused notion of the Atonement. * It makes him giddy, he says, to think much about it."

At this cottage we see Lamb most "at home," with all his "ways" and habits "fresh" in him.

To these nights at his house—to the little rooms, hung round with the engravings after Hogarth, and Poussin, Raphael, and Titian—every guest looked back with a fond longing. Milton hung on the wall, and from Milton he would read noble passages—actually weeping as he read.

Once he used to wear a snuff-coloured suit; and it is said that Wordsworth had him in view in this description:—

> But who is he with modest looks
> *And clad in homely russet brown,*
> Who murmurs near the running brooks
> A music sweeter than his own?
> He is retired as noontide dew,
> Or fountain in a noonday grove;
> And you must love him ere to you
> He will seem worthy of your love.

This seems a portrait of Lamb "at home," and was no doubt as amusing to him as Coleridge's expression of the "gentle-hearted Charles." But here he took to a complete perfect black, with "smalls" and silk stockings, such as we see him in the curious portrait in 'Fraser's' Magazine.' This odd portrait looks characteristic, presenting him at his table, with his knees gathered in, and a folio "tilted up" before him, with two candles, and the perilous decanter at hand. The head was disproportionately large to the little frame. He had black crisp hair standing up straight, a large nose, hooked—a wonderful eye—a yet more wonderful smile of sweetness, which threw his friends into delight. One who was a sort of Boswell to Coleridge, has said that a certain "Mr. Harmon, of Throgmorton-street," a stock-broker, had precisely the same smile, which furnished a text for some delightful, speculative rambling on the part of Coleridge, who tried to account for this coincidence.. It was said there was a decidedly Jewish cast in his face. He himself used to maintain—

not in his fanciful sonnet—that his proper family name was Lombe; and from this feeling he took the title Elia.

We may stop here a moment, to put, side by side with this sketch, a little note which I have found in an old 'Gentleman's Magazine.' The editor then perfectly remembered Charles sitting in the Museum, and making his extracts, and Miss Lamb "doing us the honour of showing us her brother's MSS. previous to publication." He also recollected "her incredulity and good-natured peevishness," when he informed her that he also possessed most of the plays from which Lamb had so laboriously made his selection. It was scarcely good-natured information.

The same hand writes in another place:—"Mr. L., in his own style, hath neither peer nor follower. We hope he is now quietly seated in the company he likes —Burton, Fuller, and Ben Jonson—with, *perhaps*, Old Burbage and Penkethman dropping in. We shall never forget our suppers at Islington—Miss Lamb

(truly Agna Dei) opening the door, and Lamb preceding us up stairs.

Summum proper ibat *Lambere* tectum."

His was not a pastoral mind. Like Johnson, and many more besides Johnson—who do not shrink from the Gothic unfashionableness of the confession—his heart was in the great city—in that haunted London, among whose stones flit ghosts, and memories of such absorbing interest. Even in the country he preferred the high road to the green lane, perhaps, too, for the pleasure of seeing the pleasant old inn grow into sight. Nor could he pass by there, however, without a draught of ale, by which he measured his progress. "Now we have walked a pint," said he to his friend Hood.

But his sister is said to have regarded this metrical system with a foreboding very natural, and with her warning sign often cautioned him as he went out on his walk. Yet with the long walk, and the green lanes, and high roads, and the coaches passing by, and the

recurring village, the tankard at the old inn bar, is not out of harmony. Some one told him, a little ill-naturedly, that a Miss ——, a teacher at a ladies' school, had married a publican. "Has she so?" said he, "then I'll get my beer there!" There was a good-natured rebuke behind this. Leigh Hunt thought his a head worthy of Aristotle. He read off Lamb's character with great nicety. He traced a good deal of his mournful gloomy turn to an excess of dreamy rumination, and a disinclination to exert his understanding. Thus, though he would not admit an absurdity, his mind was not strong enough to shake off the impression. He would tolerate it. Thus would he bear a superstition and yet be in trouble at it. And his tone of mind made him mentally lazy, and willing to make the best of everything. The corner cupboards of his mind, and the little old-fashioned "bits" that stocked them, are all in harmony with this, even to the smallest little scraps. It was natural that he should hate the new buildings in Regent's Park, and have a secret grudge against what

he thought the official "heaven expounders," *i. e.*, clergymen. All his odd answers fall in with this notion.

He cared little for Byron's poetry, and not much for Shelley's. From Shelley the calumny of an enemy—as Shelley owned before his death—had separated him. Of Byron he spoke strongly; and saw through the melodramatic affectations and assimulated morbidness of the noble author.

He said that he was "great in a so little a way. To be a poet is to be the Man; not a petty portion of *occasional* low passion worked up into a permanent form of humanity. Shakespeare has thrust such dark rubbishly feelings into a corner—as in the dark dusky heart of Don John."

His cottage stood alone, though in a row. Lamb himself said, with his pleasant smile, that "he did not like The Row," hinting at "another Row." Behind it was a poor sort of garden, where he had once abstractedly watched a spider and fly on a gooseberry-bush.

He described it after in his own way. "Good God!" he said, "I never saw such a thing; directly he was caught in her fatal spinning, she dashed down on him, and in a moment turned him out, completely lapped in a shroud. It reminded me of the Fatal Sisters, in Gray." He did not, however, pursue such studies, being wholly indifferent to such little operations, caring more, as he said, "for Men-sects, than for Insects."

In any one of Lamb's jests, verbal or more practical, it is impossible to discover lurking the least particle of ill-nature, scarcely even the mental or physical *inconvenience* of a moment. Such would have been no jests for him. We can enjoy his relish of Dyer's oddities, and his triumph unconcealed, at once having got the Quaker Barton to direct a letter to him, "C. Lamb, *Esquire.*" So, too, with his pleasant humour of trying to persuade his dear sister that she was stone deaf, and addressing her in the pitch that deaf people are usually addressed. Some way, all the histories and stories preserved of him have the same tone; even the

little sketch given of him by Hood—his cheerful entrance with the smile, and his two fingers out—and on Hood's asking him to dinner, and saying, "we shall have a hare," and his bright eyes twinkling and sparkling, and the smile mellowing as he stammers out, "and—many —f—friends."

A letter that he wrote to this friend is as delightful as any one in the 'Life,' and should be preserved. The surprising seriousness and good faith of the recommendation to call on the baker at "No. 13, Standgat Street," can only be appreciated, when it is known that there was no such being, and that the whole was one of Lamb's pleasant fictions.

"And what dost thou at the Priory? Cucullus non facit Monachum. English me that, and challenge old Lignum Janua to make a better.

"My old New River has presented no extraordinary novelties lately. But there Hope sits day after day speculating upon traditionary gudgeons. I think she has taken the fisheries. I now know the reason why

our forefathers were denominated East and West Angles. Yet is there no lack of spawn, for I wash my hands in fishlets that come through the pump every morning, thick as motelings—little things that perish untimely, and never taste the brook. You do not tell me of those romantic Land Bays that be as thou goest to Lover's Seat, neither of that little Churchling in the midst of a wood (in the opposite direction nine furlongs from the town), that seems dropt by the Angel that was tired of carrying two packages; marry, with the other he made shift to pick his flight to Loretto. Inquire out and see my little Protestant Loretto. It stands apart from trace of human habitation, yet hath it pulpit, reading-desk, and trim font of massiest marble, as if Robinson Crusoe had reared it to soothe himself with old church-going images. I forget its Xtian name, and what She Saint was its gossip.

"You should also go to No. 13, Standgate Street, a baker, who has the finest collection of marine monsters in ten sea counties; sea-dragons, polypi, mer-people,

most fantastic. You have only to name the old gentleman in black (not the Devil), that lodged with him a week (he'll remember) last July, and he will show courtesy. He is by far the foremost of the *savans*. His wife is the funniest thwarting little animal! They are decidedly the lions of green Hastings. Well, I have made an end of my say;—my epistolary time is gone by when I could have scribbled as long (I will not say as agreeable) as thine was to both of us. I am dwindled to notes and letterets. But in good earnest I shall be most happy to hail thy return to the waters of old Sir Hugh. There is nothing like inland murmurs, fresh ripples, and our native minnows.

> He sang in meads how sweet the brooklets ran,
> To the rough ocean and red restless sands.

I design to give up smoking; but I have not yet fixed upon the equivalent vice. I must have quid pro quo, or quo pro *quid*, as Tom Woodgate would correct me. My service to him.

C. L."*

* From 'Hood's Own.'

With a surprising good-nature he would go through that most trying act of human charity—looking over MS. He once read himself nearly blind with a dreadful production of this sort—striving to find out something that would redeem a grain even among all this chaff. He could not endure to give pain in *that* direction. 'The Messiah' was sent to him—in print—as a present: and he could write back that the verses had "great sweetness and a *New Testament plainness about them*"—quaint and charming phrase. But it entailed on him the greater epic, 'The Fall of Cambria,' which he also read through, and good-naturedly said that "the character of Llewellyn pleases me *more than anything else:* and *then* some of the lyrical pieces are *fine varieties.*"

At Church Street, Edmonton, his landlord was that T—— W——, whose portrait given by Lamb is so truly Shandyan, the retired "thriving Haberdasher," with the "one anecdote," and "forty pounds a year,"—the same who, on a commercial mission, rode foaming

into Dunstable upon a mad horse; with other graphic points about him. He had a wife also, "Dame W——;" and with this honest pair Charles Lamb lived. He liked them. Talfourd does not give their name; but some time after Mr. Mitford went out to see the place, and the landlady gave him her card*—

Mrs. Walden.

CHURCH STREET.

Some way, all particulars about Lamb's home and household are interesting. For he is of the small circle who seem to stand before us in flesh and blood, not pale cold abstractions—ghosts in paper and print and binding. For long he had submissively endured the rule of a sort of housekeeper "Becky," a true specimen

* From the fly-leaf of a MS. book of Mr. Mitford's, in the British Museum.

of the "old-servant" Tyranny, and who having a thorough contempt for the "ways" of bookish men, and having experience too—for she had served Hazlitt previously—affected to control the whole house in matters of the world. Yet she was faithful to them, stood between them and tradesmen's extortions; for Lamb had a theory, that it was only fair to bakers, butchers, &c., to pay for what the house *ought* to consume, not for what it did consume; and when she abdicated and left them, to be married, we find Lamb missing her a little, and rather disgusted with her placid and submissive successor; ("she is less than a cat," he said, "and just better than a deal dresser.") "With all her airs," he says of Becky, "she was yet a home piece of furniture, a record of better days."*

At Enfield Chase they stopped with another old couple called "Leishman," a narrow-souled pair,

* This little account of "Becky" is from Mr. Patmore's "Recollections," a book which contains some curious little characteristics of several eminent men, but attenuated to a degree almost inconceivable by circumlocutions and platitudes.

greedy of gain. The Lambs paid them very large sums for rent and housekeeping, nearly double the real value: but still every little extra was watched with a cupidity almost painful. Lamb felt this tyranny of avarice, yet endured it patiently, was even philosophical and merry over it, with his friends. He used to dwell on it as a curious trait in human character, their running the risk of losing two such profitable tenants for the sake of an extra sixpence. But the most amusing illustration was when Wordsworth and another friend came down to tea. In the next week's bill "*one of the two extra teas*" was rated at a sixpence higher than the other, a surcharge justified on the ground that "the elder gentleman," *i.e.* Wordsworth, "had *taken such a quantity of sugar in his tea.*"

It is pleasant to know that Lamb did not want that kind sympathy for dogs which seems to be now almost the perfect complement to every great and kindly man. Thomas Hood possessed a large and sagacious dog, and had presented him to Lamb. Dash, as he was called,

soon found out the self-sacrifice of his master's nature, and with the complacent tyranny of his kind, turned it to his own profit. He never suffered Lamb, who delighted in long, solitary, dreamy walks, to leave the house without taking him, and when they got out would only go in the direction he chose to take. The dreamy, solitary walks therefore became changed into a nervous, troubled, and restless exercise. Dash was always half a mile in front, or lost in the fields, to the right and left exploring the country—his master toiling on behind, or waiting anxiously in the road. When in the Regent's Park, Dash would squeeze himself through the railings and be fairly lost among the bushes for half an hour at a time. This troublesome creature had finally to be taken to Fulham, and made a present of to Mr. Patmore.

It had grown into a custom that Lamb and his sister should dine every third Wednesday with Mr. Cary. This had been interrupted by the latter's visit to the Continent. The custom was renewed on Mr. Cary's

return; and Talfourd gives that characteristic note, commencing "By Cot's blessing, we will not be absent at the grace." Later came the borrowing of 'Philips' Thesaurus Poetarum,' about which Lamb wrote his last letter. Talfourd, however, does not mention that the leaf was found folded down at the account of the death of Sir Philip Sidney. This furnished the owner of the volume with a text for the following verses:—

So should it be, my gentle friend:
Thy leaf last closed at Sidney's end;
Thou too like Sidney would have given
The water, thirsting, and near heaven;
Nay, were it wine, fill'd to the brim,
Thou hadn't look'd hard, but given like him.

And hast thou mingled them among—
Those famous sons of ancient song?
And do they gather round and praise
Thy relish of their nobler lays?

Waxing in mirth to hear thee tell
With what strange mortals thou didst dwell:
At thy quaint sallies more delighted,
Than any's long among them lighted!

'Tis done: and thou hast joined a crew
To whom thy soul was justly due,
And I yet think, whoe'er they be,
They scarcely love thee more than we.

A little "notelet" to the same writer, of which Talfourd only gives a scrap, will be read with interest.*

DEAR SIR,

If convenient, will you give us house-room on Sunday next? I can sleep anywhere. If any other Sunday suits you better, pray let me know. *We were* talking of roast shoulder of mutton and onion sauce. But I scorn to prescribe to the hospitalities of mine host.

Talfourd reads, "*We are thinking* of roast shoulder of mutton," &c., which is not nearly so characteristic as Lamb's own phrase.

It is curious that he should have repeated two little acts of Sterne's life. Yorick's character given in 'Tristram Shandy' is singularly like the one by Lamb of himself, as will be evident from a single passage. The "friend of the late Elia" says: "The truth is, he gave

* Talfourd says, also, "in a note to his host about *this time*," i.e., 1834. It was in reality dated eleven years before.

himself too little concern what he uttered, and in whose presence. He observed neither time nor place, and would e'en out *with what came uppermost.* . . . Few understood him. . . . He too much affected that dangerous figure—irony. He sowed doubtful speeches and reaped plain, unequivocal hatred. He would interrupt the gravest discussion with some light jest; and yet not, perhaps, quite irrelevant in ears that could understand it. . . . He would stutter out some senseless pun which has stamped his character for the evening. It was hit or miss with him: but nine times out of ten he contrived by this device to send away a whole company his enemies." Now compare Yorick: "So that upon his first setting out, the brisk gale of his spirits, as you will imagine, ran him foul, ten times in a day of somebody's tackling; and as the grave and more slow-paced were oftenest in his way, you may likewise imagine it was with such he had generally the ill-luck to get the most entangled. But, in plain truth, he was a man unhackneyed and unpractised in the world. . . .

and as his comments had usually the ill fate to be terminated either in a *bon mot*, or to be enlivened throughout with some drollery or humour of expression, it gave wings to Yorick's indiscretion. In a word, as he seldom shunned occasions of saying *what came uppermost* and without much ceremony, he had but too many temptations in life of scattering his wit and his humour, his gibes and his jests about him. They were not lost for want of gathering."

It will be observed that there is the same wounded tone in both these complaints—and in one portion even the same expression. Another point of resemblance between these two great Shandyans was their both writing little quaint autobiographies, not two pages long. Sterne's is well-known: here is Lamb's:—

"Charles, born in the Inner Temple, 10 February, 1775 . . . . pensioned off 1825, after 33 years' service: is now a gentleman at large; can remember few specialities in his life, except that he once

caught a swallow flying (*teste sua manu*): below the middle stature . . . . stammers abominably, and is therefore more apt to discharge his occasional conversation in a quaint aphorism or a poor quibble than in set or edifying speeches: has consequently been libelled with aiming at wit, which, as he told a dull fellow that charged him with it, is at least as good as aiming at dulness. A small eater but not drinker: confesses a partiality for the production of the juniper berry: was a great smoker of tobacco, but may be resembled to a volcano burnt out, emitting only now and then a casual puff.

His true works are in Leadenhall Street, filling some hundred folios. . . . In short, all his merits and demerits to set forth, would take to the end of Mr. Upcott's book, and then not be told truly.

He died —— 18—, much lamented.* His queer

* *To Anybody.*—Please to fill up these blanks.

Witness his hand,

CHARLES LAMB,

18th *April*, 1827.

spirit departed. . . . Crude they are, I grant you—a sort of unlicked incondite things—villanously pranked in an affected array of antique modes and phrases. They had not been his, if they had been other than such: and better it is that a writer should be natural in a self-pleasing quaintness, than to affect a naturalness (so called) that should be strange to him."

It was Coleridge who told Mr. Cottle of Lamb's—in some fit—fancying himself young Norval.

It is sad to think that Lamb's latter days were not of the calm and pleasant sort described by his friend. A great tenderness and delicacy, or friendly sensitiveness, has kept back from the account of Lamb's history much which concerned the horrid spectre which attended him all through his life. We are led to believe that in time that great and dreadful trouble had been softened for him, and had, as it were, faded out, and that the evening of his days had been calm and tranquil. This, at least, would be the impression, reading his closing days at Edmonton. But it is said, and it is

vouched for by good authority,* that not long before he died, he and his sister had been placed at Enfield in a house called Bay Cottage, with a woman named Redford, who was accustomed to take charge of deranged persons. It is said that both required restraint, and that the woman of the place treated them with cruelty, often locking up brother and sister together in a closet during some of their fits. There are those who recollect having seen Mary Lamb at a window tearing up a feather-bed and scattering the feathers in the air. Fortunately, friends found out this pitiable state of things, and Charles was removed in time to Edmonton, where he could die in peace.

During that interval his mind seemed to be filled with but one subject—it always reverted to Coleridge; and in the strangest way—even humorously—he would interrupt the conversation with an abrupt exclamation, "So Coleridge is gone!"

* See Mr. S. C. Hall's graphic 'Recollections of Literary Persons' in the 'Art Journal.' He himself heard the whole story from the woman Redford herself.

On November 21st, five weeks only before he died, he was asked to write something in a friend's album. "When I heard of the death of Coleridge," he wrote, "it was without grief. It seemed to me that he had long been on the confines of the next world—*that he had a hunger for eternity. But since I feel how great a part he was of me, his great and dear spirit haunts me. I cannot think a thought, I cannot make a criticism on men or books without an ineffectual turning and reference to him.* He was the proof and touchstone of all my cogitations. . . . . *He was my fifty years' old friend without a dissension.* Never saw I his likeness, nor probably the world can see again. *I seem to love the house he died at more passionately than when he died . . . What was his mansion, is consecrated to me a chapel.*" A more pathetic chime to a departed friend—especially in the words underlined—was never sounded. He seemed never to recover the blow.*

* See the graphic, and at the same time touching, tribute to Lamb, by his friend Mr. John Forster, which appeared in the 'New Monthly.'

Lamb, as is well known, lies buried in the churchyard at Edmonton, with some stanzas cut upon his tomb, according to a practice happily now a little old-fashioned. Such tributes, unless very short, genuine, and done with a tender and simple touch, savour of affectation. These lines are the work of "Dante" Carey:—

> Farewell, dear friend; that smile, that harmless mirth,
> No more shall gladden our domestic hearth:
> That rising tear with pain forbid to flow,
> Better than words, no more assuage our woe;
> That hand outstretched for small but well-earned store,
> Yield succour to the destitute no more.
>
> Yet art thou not all lost: thus many an age
> With sterling sense and humour shall thy page
> Win many an English bosom, pleased to see
> That old and happier vein revived in thee.
> Thus far on earth; and if with friends we share
> Our joys in heaven, we hope to meet thee there.

A tourist overheard a couple of "canal navigators" spelling through this inscription with great gravity: and one pronounced it "as good a one as any in the whole

yard; only it was a bit long." Churchyard poetry has never been of the highest order; still we would wish that Lamb had found a better poet.

The complete collection of the more respectable English essayists fills some forty or fifty volumes. The line of descent reaching, say from Swift to the Country Parson, is almost unbroken; for to every generation it has been a welcome shape of literary diet. Yet, taken in the bulk, the fifty volumes are bald reading, and certainly fall within that austere class of volume which Charles Lamb so pleasantly says, "No gentleman's library should be without;" and which, it will be recollected, included 'Court Calendars,' 'Directories,' 'The Statutes at Large,' 'Josephus,' and draught-boards bound and lettered on the back. Tracing back this succession of essayists, it is almost amusing to see how the shape has changed and the uniform altered —how with Swift it was political and bitterly satirical; with Addison, Steele, and Goldsmith a miracle of pathos, humour, and polish; how with Johnson it

became a solemn sermon; with Coleridge a metaphysical treatise; and, in our time, a happy vehicle for interminable personal experiences and mild egotism.

Yet, of this long line of skilful masters who have gone before, there is perhaps not one so unique, so original, so distinguished by a special manner of his own, as the author of the 'Essays of Elia.' Addison and Steele—though the former is immeasurably above the latter—are pretty much in the same key. But Lamb has a quaint old instrument of his own, and almost a separate gamut. There is a fantastic charm about him—a flavour, as it were, of the olive. A fine line of irregular oddity is to be traced through his writings, quite singular, and not to be matched in other essay writers. In general, with men of this marked original stamp, there is a hint—a suspicion behind, as of something like affectation, or verging on the artificial; and the dialect of Mr. Carlyle, so often hovering on the grotesque, has exposed a really great thinker to the charge of being theatrical and unnatural, and of

forcing his free and vigorous limbs into a masquerading dress. But, in Charles Lamb's instance, the quaintness of the dress fits with the quaintness of the mind. Through this cloudy medium of language which always hangs as a curtain between reader and author, we see glimpses of the real man—his shape and colour, even his gait and manner. He takes the reader by the button, as he would his friend, and pours out upon him a current of delightful humours, and fine mental oddities, almost too delicate to be seen by vulgar eye. He is the Montaigne of English essayists, and has all the engaging confidence of the Frenchman. Yet never does he slide into an offensive familiarity, which is sure to be the case when the lower journeyman of letters begins to talk with the same freedom. He, in truth, seems to be only thinking aloud, and we are behind the tapestry listening.

There was one thing in common with him and another delightful writer, Leigh Hunt—both literally feasted on books. The taste of certain delicious volumes

seems to linger on their palates, as the memory of sweet dishes does on that of other men's. They enjoyed the flavour of a rare passage of poetry with an exquisite relish, as though it were a morsel of ripe and juicy fruit. It is impossible not to admire this genuine enthusiasm, which extended itself even to the handling of books with reverence. The secret lay in the special direction of their reading. Lamb delighted in the ripe old pastures of the purer English—in the language so full and so deep, so rich in imagery and picturesque effect, and yet so simple, which is to be found in Taylor, in Sir Thomas Browne, in Bishop Hall, and in rare old Fuller. The pages of these books seem strewn all over with lumps of gold and silver; the words seem to chink melodiously. Such veterans of the libraries, who sleep side by side in their dust, would seem about as uninteresting to common eyes as old soldiers are sometimes found to those of the young. For literary treatment, at least, they might seem a bald and unprofitable subject; yet, in the following

charming passages are old books dealt with as were old books never dealt with before, and the tenets of that faith touched with a surpassing lightness and delicacy. "I dream away my life," he says, "in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. . . . I cannot sit and think. Books think for me. I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low. I can read anything which I call book. There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such. I confess that it moves my spleen to see these things in books' clothing perched upon shelves, like false saints, usurpers of true shrines, intruders into the shrines of others, thrusting out the legitimate occupants. To reach down a well-bound semblance of a volume, and hope it some kind-hearted play-book; then, opening what seem its leaves, to come bolt upon a withering population essay. To expect a Steele or a Farquhar, and find—Adam Smith. To view a well-arranged assortment of block-headed encyclopædias, set out in an array of russia or

morocco, when a tithe of that good leather would comfortably reclothe my shivering folios—would renovate Paracelsus himself, and enable old Raymund Tully to look like himself in the world. I never see these impostors but I long to strip them, to warm my ragged veterans in their spoils."

Modern "smart" writers, as they are called, have little instinct for this nice balance—for this sly smiling in one's sleeve, joined almost to the very pathos of gravity. *Their* measure of burlesque is as broad and as exaggerated as the monstrous masks in a pantomime. With what fancy and dignity can the *real* master elevate such trifles as the physiognomy and clothing of books!

"To be strong-backed and neat-bound is the desideratum of a volume: magnificence comes after. This, when it can be afforded, is not to be lavished upon all kinds of books indiscriminately. I would not dress a set of magazines, for instance, in full suit. The deshabille, or half-binding (with russia backs even), is *our*

costume. A Shakspeare or a Milton (unless the first editions), it were mere foppery to trick out in gay apparel. The possession of them confers no distinction. The exterior of them (the things themselves being so common), strange to say, raises no sweet emotions, no tickling sense of property in them. Thomson's 'Seasons,' again, looks best (I maintain it) a little torn and dog's-eared. How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves and worn-out appearance, nay, the very odour, beyond russia, if we would not forget kind feelings in fastidiousness, of an old "circulating library" 'Tom Jones,' or 'Vicar of Wakefield!' How they speak of the thousand thumbs that have turned over their pages with delight!—of the lone sempstress whom they may have cheered—milliner or harder-working mantuamaker—after her long day's needle toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill-spared from sleep, to steep her cares in spelling out their contents! Who would have them a whit less soiled?"

This is very pleasant and very graceful. Again, the inconsistency of dressing out the ripe and stately old English writers—the greybeards of the shelves, as it were—in bright new print and paper, comes home in a small degree to everybody. Yet with what a dignity and humour he puts forward a quaint protest against this discordant style of costume! "On the contrary," he says, "I cannot read Beaumont and Fletcher but in folio. The octavo editions are painful to look at. I have no sympathy with them. I do not know a more heartless sight than the reprint of the 'Anatomy of Melancholy.' What need was there of unearthing the bones of that fantastic old great man, to expose them in a winding-sheet of the newest fashion?" Then for the fitting times and places for reading particular books: "Much depends upon *when* and *where* you read a book. In the five or six impatient minutes before the dinner is quite ready, who would think of taking up the 'Fairy Queen' for a stop-gap, or a volume of Bishop Andrews' Sermons?

"Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him . . . Winter evenings—the world shut out—with less of ceremony the gentle Shakspeare enters. At such a season 'The Tempest,' or his own 'Winter's Tale.' . . ."

There is no one who plays so delightfully, and in so special a manner of his own with the most unfruitful subjects. With him they become embroidered with the most surprising imagery. This, as I said, is to be set down to his familiarity with ripe old English; and indeed it were well if our modern tongue were enriched with some of this older blood. The topic of 'Grace before Meat' has in itself nothing very abundant, either by way of thought, suggestion, or pure fancy. The tether would be reached, one might fancy, very soon. Yet how Charles Lamb can gossip on this theme! The origin, he says, of the custom was, most likely, in the early times of the world, and in what he calls "the hunter-state of man, when dinners were precarious things, and a full meal was something more than a

common blessing. In the shouts and triumphal songs with which, after a season of sharp abstinence, a lucky booty of deer's or goat's flesh would naturally be ushered home, existed, perhaps, the germ of the modern grace." This is the humorous side; but, taking the thought in a more sober view, what a soft, fanciful air he can impart to it! "I own," he says, "that I am disposed to say grace upon *twenty* other occasions in the course of the day, besides my dinner. I want a form for setting out upon a pleasant walk, for a moonlight ramble, for a friendly meeting, or a solved problem. Why have we none for books—those spiritual repasts! a grace before Milton, a grace before Shakspeare, a devotional exercise proper to be said before reading the 'Fairy Queen?'" And why not, we of this generation may add, a form of thanks before sitting down to the piquant dainties furnished by Charles Lamb himself?

From Grace to tangible food in the pure concrete, which Grace precedes, is an easy passage. This subject, too, does not seem to be overlaid with much poetry, or

even humour. The immortal Essay on Roast Pig will be familiar to all. Never was the gravity of burlesque carried out so daringly; never was the difficult problem of finding expression for pure gastronomic raptures—whose dialect is but limited—at the same time with distinctness and a surprising humour, so *uniquely* solved. We should consider the difficulties, as if any one were to set himself to describe the fascinations of the commonest recurring dish, still more to do it with anything like humour; yet, in the hands of Charles Lamb, what a riot of wit and fancy! I do not quote it, because it is so well known; but it does appear to me that, for variety of idea and expression, and for what might be called cumulative humour—at the same time utterly redeemed from the vulgarity on which such a subject might seem to hover dangerously near—that this description is almost unsurpassed. In such feats we recognise the master.

It almost seems that the study of these writings is like growing into acquaintance with a mind, and an-

other man's life. It is a gradual and an increasing knowledge—the whole is in such unconscious harmony, and given out with such perfect nature and lack of affectation. There is nothing inconsistent. And thus we may sit with him, and talk with him, and know him better every day; and as we know him better, we shall get to the secret of that exquisite irony, more the very beginnings of irony rather than the pure irony itself, which so delicately overlays all he says. He thus finds a grave language for what others do not care to speak out; and invests with a dignified air little earthy motives, whose workings we are conscious of, but are ashamed to hint at. Those who are *acquainted* only in a superficial way with Lamb, might be scandalized at this confession. "In proportion as the years both lessen and shorten, I set more count upon their periods, and would fain lay my ineffectual finger upon the spoke of the great wheel. I am not content to pass away like 'a weaver's shuttle.' Those metaphors solace me not, nor sweeten the unpalatable draught of mortality. . . . .

I am in love with this green earth: the face of town and country: *the unspeakable, rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets.*" (How quaint and harmonious these two last expressions!) "I would set up my tabernacle here. I am content to stand still at the age to which I am arrived; I and my friends: to be no younger, no richer, no handsomer. . . . A new state of being staggers me. Sun and sky and breeze, and solitary walks and summer days, and the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society and the cheerful glass, and candle-light and fireside conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and *irony itself*—do these things go out with life? . . . And you, my midnight darlings, my folios! must I part with the intense delight of having you (huge armfuls) in my embraces? Must knowledge come to me, if it come at all, by some awakened expression of intuition, and no longer by this familiar process of reading? Shall I enjoy friendships there, wanting the smiling indications which point me to them here—the

recognizable face—the sweet utterance of a look?" The quaint oddity of the last two suppositions is admirable; and any one who took the whole description for more than a pleasant exaggeration of a keen relish of nature, and of all God's gifts, would utterly misconstrue him. So Southey misunderstood him, appealing to this as an instance of wanting a *sound* religious feeling. His *own* readers understand, as the men he knew in life understood, him.

Like Sydney Smith, he could see a comic side to certain allusions which verged a little into scriptural; but, unlike that great jester, he never slided into what bordered on the profane. His own exquisite sense of humour, as it kept him from vulgarity, saved him from this failing.

"In my father's book-closet," he says, "the 'History of the Bible,' by Stackhouse, occupied a distinguished station. The pictures with which it abounds—one of the Ark in particular, and another of Solomon's Temple, delineated with all the fidelity of ocular admeasure-

ment, as if the artist had been upon the spot—attracted my childish attention. There was a picture too of the witch raising up Samuel, which I wish that I had never seen. Stackhouse is in two huge tomes; and there was a pleasure in removing folios of that magnitude, which, with infinite straining, was as much as I could manage from the situation which they occupied upon an upper shelf." This acquaintance with Stackhouse was cut short by what he calls "a fortunate piece of good fortune. Turning over the picture of the Ark with too much haste, I unhappily made a breach in its ingenious fabric, driving my inconsiderate fingers right through the two larger quadrupeds, the elephant and the camel, that stare (as well they might) out of the two last windows next the steerage in that unique piece of naval architecture. Stackhouse was henceforth locked up, and became an interdicted treasure."

All his ruminations and conceits are in the same odd key. Who has so well analyzed the selfishness of the convalescent? "If there be regal solitude, it is a sick-

bed. How the patient lords it there! What caprices he acts without control! How king-like he sways his pillow—tumbling and tossing, and shifting and lowering, and thumping and flatting and moulding it. . . . Within the four curtains he is absolute. He keeps his sympathy, like some curious vintage, under lock and key, for his own use only. He lies pitying himself, groaning and moaning to himself; he yearneth over himself; he is even melted within him to think what he is; he is not ashamed to weep over himself. He is for ever plotting how to do some good to himself—studying little stratagems and artificial alleviations. He makes the most of himself, dividing himself, by an allowable fiction, into as many distinct individuals as he hath sore and sorrowing members. Sometimes he meditates, as if a thing apart from him, upon his poor aching head; or he pities his long, clammy, attenuated fingers. He compassionates himself all over, and his bed is a very discipline of humanity and tender heart." This mention of the heart suggests another diverting speculation to

be found in his paper on St. Valentine's Day. "That three-cornered exponent," he calls it, "of our hopes and fears; the bestuck and bleeding heart, twisted and tortured into more allegories and affectations than an opera hat. What authority," he goes on to ask, "have we in history or mythology for placing the head-quarters and metropolis of god Cupid in this anatomical seat? Else, we might easily imagine, upon some other system which might have prevailed, for anything which our pathology knows to the contrary, a lover addressing his mistress, in perfect simplicity of feeling—'Madam, my liver and fortune are entirely at your disposal.'" So, too, his comic partiality for chimney-sweeps. "I have a kindly yearning towards these dim specks, poor blots, innocent blacknesses. I reverence these young Africans of our own growth, these almost clergy imps, who sport their cloth without assumption." Two expressions here—the "innocent blacknesses," and "these almost clergy imps"—convey in a small space the best instance of Lamb's peculiar and most favourite form of

humorous expression. So, too, in the instance of the Unitarian minister who used to read a volume of Lardner along the crowded Snow-hill. "I used to admire," says Lamb, "how he sidled along, keeping clear of secular contacts. An illiterate encounter with a porter's knot, or a bread-basket, would have quickly put to flight all the theology I am master of." And here again the expressions, "secular contacts," and "illiterate encounter," are truly piquant and characteristic. So, too, with that odd paper where he complains of the behaviour of young married people towards bachelors, of which he takes a truly Shandyan view. He complains not of the open preference which they have for each other, which, he says, is reasonable enough, but of the way "they perk it up in the faces of us single people so shamelessly, you cannot be in their company a moment without being made to feel, by some indirect hint or open avowal, that you are not the object of this preference."

But perhaps the most pleasant, because the most

fantastic of his writings, is that sheaf of homely and established saws which every one receives with the homage due to an axiom, but which he gravely proceeds to refute as though they were dangerous fallacies. "Enough is as good as a feast," is a hoary proverb; but Lamb says, "it was made in revenge by somebody who was disappointed of a regale. It is a vile cold-scrag-of-mutton sophism: a lie palmed upon the palate, which knows better things." And yet under this agreeable irony there is a serious hint, that these old-fashioned commonplaces had served their turn, and might as well be superannuated. And thus he disposes of "Handsome is that handsome does," with a wonderfully fanciful sketch of a certain ugly Mrs. Conrady, arriving at the conclusion that "if one must be plain, it is better to be plain all over, than, amidst a tolerable residue of feature, to hang out one that shall be exceptionable." The *tout ensemble* in Mrs. Conrady defies particularizing. "It is not as if some Apelles had picked out here a lip and there a chin, out of the

collected *ugliness* of Greece; it is a symmetrical whole: we are convinced that true ugliness, no less than true beauty, is the result of harmony."

The best part of the entertainment is that in Lamb himself we read 'Elia's Essays.' Now that we have his 'Life' and his 'Letters,' we find that everything he said and did fits harmoniously with what he wrote. The loss of his writings would actually leave a fatal gap in his history. He was as natural, when he held his pen in his hand, as when he held his pipe, and gathered his friends together at those simple suppers which were so long wistfully remembered. This is indeed the charm of reading 'Elia,' for we are never disquieted by the bitter doubts which Mr. Thackeray says occurred to him, when relishing the "surprising humour" and sentiment of Sterne; "that is, how much of the point and emphasis is necessary for the fair business of the stage, and how much of the rant and rouge is put on for the vanity of the actor."

Sterne's life we know to have been as Shandyan as

his writings, and in Lamb's instance there was no acting, no rouge, and no rant. As a pretty instance of this happy correspondence between his life and writings, a daughter of Sheridan Knowles used to tell how, as a very little girl, she had been taken out by Charles Lamb for a day's holiday to see all the shows, and how on meeting a Punch's show, they sat down together on a door-step and saw the entertainment through—not only one, but a whole series, which for him as well as for his little companion seemed to have an inexhaustible charm.

'Elia' is of that rich quality of book which is as inexhaustible as a fruitful mind: every fresh reading turns up some new thought or new beauty; it is a book for the pocket, like the 'Pocket Shakespeare,'—a book to be selected where trunk-room is precious, and where a hundred favourites invite with distracting claims, because it has the substance of a small library. There are few books "both good and rare, where the individual is almost the species, whose contents have such

a proportion to their bulk." "I should not care," he says in his half-burlesque way, "to be caught in the serious avenues of some cathedral alone, and reading 'Candide.'" For 'Candide' the reader may substitute 'Elia.'

Yet with all his quaintness and disorderly current of thought, the mere "English" of Lamb is wonderful. In this apparent no-art, there is everywhere an abundant artfulness. Those little "dashes" which he uses so profusely are disposed with the nicest harmony both for eye and ear. Somehow it has always seemed to me, that he extracts a new force out of italics, which he uses very sparingly. He has charming little forms of his own, which fit him, and him only. They are truly Lambesque, if we may use the word. Thus, "what a noble simplification of language (*beyond Tooke*),"—"nay the very odour (beyond Russia)." He gives a double force to epithets, by a fashion peculiarly his own; as, for instance, "in the serious avenues of some cathedral;" "the *elder* repose of MSS.;" "some seldom explored

Press;" "thy wife too, that part Frenchwoman, better part Englishwoman;" "you are glad to put up with an *inferior* spring of action"—*i. e.*, cards; "I love to get a tierce or a quatorze;" "I am subdued to an inferior interest."

Here are some true 'Elia' phrases, refreshingly new in turn, whose very turn is part of the secret of the humour: "Can I forget thy honest, yet slender crew, with their coy, reluctant responses (*yet to the suppression of anything like contempt*) to the raw questions," etc., "conciliating interpreters of their skill to our simplicity;" "Sunday, that unfortunate failure of a holiday;" "Such one might have mustered for a tall scapula."

It is very strange that Talfourd should have placed Lamb's melancholy above his humorous vein. The study and acquaintance of nearly twenty years has reversed this official judgment, and premised that while his serious writing has a good deal in common with what has been written before, his humour is all but unique--

has an oddity and quaintness not to be found elsewhere. To analyze it seems impossible; but its spell seems to be drawn from the turns of *thought*, as well as of expression, of the older writers. From an extraordinary familiarity—and a delight equalling this familiarity—he had brought himself *to view* modern things as they would have done, and the antique turn of expression followed as readily. This gravity and earnestness of speech, applied to trifling matters, is part of the charm; not, be it observed, after the pattern of modern burlesque, in which it is apparent that the gravity is assumed—but with him the phrases are the appropriate ones that a person *in earnest* would use. Not less to be admired is his surprising instinct as to the proper *value* of words, and the *position* of words; an art by which he enriches his style to a surprising degree. It would be endless to dwell on his grave assumptions, his limitations, and delicate corrections of himself, so that his meaning might not be carried too far—his surmises, and ambiguities, and strange-sounding words that contain a whole

sentence. Nothing, too, was more delightful than his way of treating some mean subject, by the agency of grand and solemn names, fitting antiquity and the classical times to the vulgarest modern incidents: a thing it may be repeated, done in the commonest burlesques of the stage, and with it was, as though Cicero or Fuller was gravely discoursing upon an incident in the Edmonton stage. Besides this, he had *great* reading, the fruits of which were always *ready;* a surprising fancy, and above all, exquisite economy in his words, always chosing the exact one fitted for the place.

A single expression, taken literally at random, will illustrate this delicacy and "economy"—the secret of so much abundance in meaning. In his delightful bit of grotesque on the little chimney-sweepers, he speaks of them as these "*almost clergy imps.*" In these three words and their collocation there is a surprising art. First he wished to convey the burlesque contrast between the solemn idea of a clergyman and his dress, and the little "innocent blacknesses" whom he called

"imps." An inferior hand, having the same idea, would have put something after the metaphorical model, "*just like* little clergymen, etc.," which the reader would resent as forced, and say there was no likeness in the world. Lamb merely wished to convey a *hint* of a clergyman, or *faint air* of the cloth—no positive matter-of-fact statement; and thus he hits on that indistinct apposition, "clergy imps," making clergy, as it were, an adjective. But he goes even further; for there is the word "*almost*," cutting down yet more the meaning, and making the whole yet more indistinct. In this little specimen, and a hundred such might be given, we have the secret of Lamb's nice selection and exquisite touch. Even in his titles, what a delicacy and pregnancy, and even an airy irony! Thus, as a single instance, with 'The Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis.' There is an art and significance in the choice of the word "decay." It is the key to the whole essay that follows, conveying, as it were, that mendicancy was one of the choice blessings and pleasant things of

life decaying away, just as the old "artificial fountains" in the old squares of London were being bricked-up and abolished.

His admiration for "*Fool,*" especially the Scripture instances, is very comic: "I grudged at the hard censure pronounced upon the quiet soul that kept his talent; and —prizing their simplicity beyond the more provident, and, to my apprehension, somewhat *unfeminine* wariness of their competitors—I felt a kindliness, that almost amounted to a *tendre*, for those five thoughtless virgins." Again, too, in another paper: "I remember their effigies by the same token in the old *Basket* Prayer Book. There hung Peter in his uneasy posture—holy Bartlemy in the troublesome act of flaying, after the famous Marsyas by Spagnoletti. I honoured them all, and could have mourned the defalcation of Iscariot—so much did we love to keep holy memories sacred: only methought—I a little grudged at the coalition of the *better Jude* with Simon—clubbing (as it were) their sanctities together, to make up one poor gaudy

day between them, as an economy unworthy of the dispensation."

The subjects, too, of these little treatises are so odd, so original in choice and treatment, that there was scarcely need for him to announce that "out-of-the-way humours and opinions—heads with some diverting twist in them—please me most." As an instance of variety in treatment of one idea, the analysis of a Scotch mind is marvellous. He adds stroke after stroke, returns to the charge fresh and unbreathed; and I think it has scarcely been remarked how Sydney Smith imported this *tactique* into conversation, and, as in the description of a stout old lady, worked it with success. Never were chimney-sweepers—witness the quaint hypothesis to account for the finding of the young sweep in the state bed—Jews, Beggars, Poor Relations, Benchers, Actors, and—coming from persons to things and speculations—Valentines, Ears, Whist, and a hundred such subjects, so dealt with before. The charm is the irregularity, the remoteness even of the title, and the subject

into which it finally strays away—as in that delicately-pathetic paper on 'Old China,' as lightly touched as a bit of precious old china itself.

From Lamb to Dickens is an easy transition. The world is familiar with the works of the great English story-teller—with the stream of tales which the enchanter of the Thousand-and-One English Nights' Entertainments has poured out, with an amazing variety, and an abundance of fancy which, even now, seems like a newly-discovered storehouse. Where other men fall away and drop out of fashion, his prestige has only increased; he has controlled the habitual fickleness of his great public; and at the first page of every new book acknowledges to having had an audience larger by many thousands than for his last. His men and women are as distinct, and about as sure of living, as are the men and women of history; and his stories will draw tears and laughter so long as pathos and humour shall have power to exact that homage. Not so familiar,

perhaps, because chiefly anonymous, are the light essays and sketches which dot the well-known journal so long associated with his name. Yet, though more or less subject to the fatal butterfly destiny, which waits on all periodical literature, they are yet marvellously artistic, are quite worthy of his more serious works, have all the charm of a pleasant absence of grave responsibility, and above all have a truly Elian tinge and flavour.

It has always seemed strange that the attention of the public should have settled upon the older 'Essays by Boz,' than upon the more modern and finished efforts to be found in the 'Reprinted Pieces' and the charming 'Uncommercial Traveller.' There is a good-humoured tone of modulated satire, and a charming grotesqueness, without the least violence, which, either by suggestion or shape, link the thousand material objects about us to our mental sympathies, and delightfully bridge over the space between mind and matter. Charles Lamb has not the least of this special gift. His appreciation moved in a different groove.

This delicate play of analogy, so luxuriant in the novelist, was quite foreign to him. His skill lay in a knowledge of the crannies and queer passages of the mind, in the old cracked china, laid up in certain mental corner cupboards. On one subject, however, they strike a common chord. Every one familiar with Mr. Dickens's writings must have felt his wonderful acquaintance with the ways, feelings, and manners of children; with their pleasant logical no-logic, their odd views of things, the gravity with which they invest trifles, and the thousand little marks and tokens which raise a child's life to the dignity of a special world. Many journeyman hands have been tried on this delicate instrument; but in the deeper knowledge, and the graces of poetry, and a surpassing interest reaching almost to a fascination, no one has even approached Mr. Dickens. From the little life of Paul Dombey, over whose death all England was said to have wept as over the death of some real child, to the little pair who ran away and put up at the Holly-tree Inn—a situation of comic impro-

bability to which no other living writer could have imparted *vraisemblance*—he has explored the whole world of child-life.

So delicate and airy is this old bloom of infancy, so fine the pathos, that though we look back with a wistful interest on such early impressions, still most grasps are too rough and clumsy to deal with them. As we are comparing these two great writers, I cannot resist giving a specimen or two of Mr. Dickens's Elian handling of an analogous subject. We can see what humour, and even poetry, can be fetched out of such things as children's toys. "I never wondered," he says —looking back to his childish festivals in the charming paper called 'A Christmas Tree'—"what the dear old donkey with the panniers—there he is!—was made of then. His hide was real to the touch, I recollect. And the great black horse, with round red spots all over him—the horse that I could even get upon—I never wondered what had brought him to that strange condition, or thought that such a horse was not com-

monly seen at Newmarket. The four horses of no colour, next to him, that went into the waggon of cheeses, and could be taken out and stabled under the piano, appear to have bits of fur tippets for their tails, and other bits for their manes, and to stand on pegs instead of legs; but it was not so when they were brought home for a Christmas present. They were all right then; neither was their harness unceremoniously nailed into their chests, as appears to be the case now."

He then speaks of the doll's house, "the entire house-front of which opened all at once (which was a blow, I admit, as cancelling the fiction of a staircase), which contained a sitting-room and bed-room elegantly furnished, and, best of all, a kitchen with uncommonly soft fire-irons . . . and a tin man-cook in profile, who was always going to fry two fish. What Barmecide justice have I done to the noble feasts wherein the set of wooden platters figured, each with its own peculiar delicacy, as a ham or turkey, glued tight on to it,

and garnished with something green, which I recollect as moss! . . . And if the two legs of the ineffectual little sugar-tongs did tumble over one another and want purpose, like Punch's hands, what does it matter? And if I did once shriek out, as a poisoned child, and strike the fashionable company with consternation, by reason of having drunk a little teaspoon, inadvertently dissolved in too hot tea, I was never the worse for it, except by a powder!" . . . .

Not much is to be made of a Noah's Ark, yet, by a few touches, it becomes what Lamb would call "a glorified Noah's Ark," and is lifted into the domains of poetry and humour; and it will be noted how happily the proper key is found, just as the French composers find delicate, airy stories for their operas, and fit them with music as airy and as delicate. "I felt," he says, "that if I could have married a Little Red Riding Hood, I should have known perfect bliss. But it was not to be; and there was nothing for it but to look out the wolf in the Noah's Ark there, and put him late in

the procession, as a monster who was to be degraded. Oh the wonderful Noah's Ark! It was not found seaworthy when put in a washing-tub, and the animals were crammed in at the roof, and needed to have their legs well shaken down before they could be got in, even there—and then ten to one but they began to tumble out at the door, which was but imperfectly fastened with a wire latch, but what was that against it! Consider the goose, whose feet were so small, and whose balance so indifferent, that he usually tumbled forward, and knocked down all the animal creation. Consider Noah and his family, like idiotic tobacco-stoppers; and how the leopard stuck to warm little fingers; and how the tails of the larger animals used gradually to resolve themselves into frayed bits of string."

So, too, with a more advanced stage of childhood, which has also its humorous side, as with that school, where the "principal currency" was slate-pencil. "It had some inexplicable value, that was never ascertained,

never reduced to a standard. To have a great hoard of it was some way to be rich." And when the holidays were coming round, he tells us, public feeling was evoked in behalf of certain poor boys, known as "holiday stoppers," whose relatives were in India, and who would have to remain; and "personally we always contributed these tokens of sympathy in the form of slate-pencil, and always felt that it would be a comfort and a treasure to them."

Dipping into another charming paper of his on an English Sea-bathing Place, the same light hand touches in little child sketches worthy of Collins or Wilkie. "In the afternoon," he says, "you see no end of salt and sandy little boots drying on upper window-sills. At bathing-time in the morning, the little bay re-echoes with every shrill variety of shriek and splash; after which, if the weather be at all fresh, the sands teem with small blue mottled legs. The sands are the children's great resort. They cluster there like ants, so busy burying their particular friends, and making

castles with infinite labour, which the next tide overthrows, that it is curious to consider how their play, to the music of the sea, overshadows the realities of their after lives."

To conclude.—Here is the secret of the difference between these two great writers. Each has used what is called the 'Essay' for a different purpose: with Lamb it has become a profound and skilful analysis of mental phenomena, lightened by a surprising humour; with Dickens there is the same humour present, working on a cloud of more material images, which imparts a more human interest. The material is different in both; but in the humour, both are surprisingly akin, as any one may see who puts the passage on Stackhouse's Bible and that about the Noah's Ark side by side.

THE END.

00023356

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET
AND CHARING CROSS.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 26 June, 2018